Vol. VII. No. 2 September, 1938

# SCRUTINY

## A Quarterly Review

*Edited by*

D. W. HARDING L. C. KNIGHTS
F. R. LEAVIS DENYS THOMPSON

### CONTENTS

THE PHILOSOPHY OF MARXISM, by *H. B. Parkes* *page* 130

BAUDELAIRE, by *James Smith* 145

THE COMPOSER AND CIVILIZATION (II): Albert Roussel and La Musique Française, by *W. H. Mellers* 166

E. M. FORSTER, by *F. R. Leavis* 185

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS 202

MUSIC: VAN DIEREN AND RUBBRA, Note by W.H.M. (p. 202). CATERPILLARS OF THE COMMONWEALTH UNITE! *Three Guineas*, reviewed by Q. D. Leavis (p. 203). THE T. E. HULME MYTH, *T. E. Hulme*, reviewed by H. A. Mason (p. 215). HOPKINS AND PATMORE, *Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, reviewed by R. G. Cox (p. 217). MR. SPENDER'S PLAY, *Trial of a Judge*, reviewed by H. A. Mason (p. 219). THE POET OF REVOLUTION, *Arthur Rimbaud* and *Rimbaud in Abyssinia*, reviewed by Martin Turnell (p. 223). RAINER MARIA RILKE, reviews by Richard March (p. 235). AIDS TO ENGLISH TEACHING, *Poetry in Practice* and *English Poetry: A Students' Anthology*, reviewed by Frank Chapman (p. 243). *A History of Economic Thought*, reviewed by P. Harris (p. 245). *Busoni's Letters to his Wife*, noticed by W.H.M. (p. 248).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# THE PHILOSOPHY OF MARXISM

MARXISM is presented by its adherents as a coherent system of theory and practice from which no deviation may be tolerated. Such an attitude inspires Communists with the energy and the self-sacrifice of religious fanaticism, but it also causes them to misjudge concrete situations and to alienate many who might be sympathetic to their immediate aims. In reality Marxism is both a sociological method and a body of concrete doctrine. As a method it is of the greatest importance ; but as a doctrine it is a mixture of partial truths with the most irrational mysticism.

The characteristic of Marxism as a sociological method is that it takes as its point of departure the concrete needs of concrete human beings. The most fundamental human needs are economic. In the process of satisfying their need for food, clothing and shelter, human beings create different systems of production and different social structures, and become divided into classes. Since different classes share unequally in the distribution of economic goods, conflicts develop between them ; and these class conflicts have been the chief dynamic force in human history. According to Marx man's outlook on the world is a reflection of his class interests ; social existence determines consciousness, and religious philosophical and political ideologies tend to be disguised expressions of economic drives, having the effect of justifying either a ruling class which wishes to retain its privileges or a revolutionary class which is fighting to destroy those privileges.

Marx did not invent the economic interpretation of history, but his followers have been the first to apply it systematically to all social phenomena : and their claim to be scientific sociologists is not unreasonable. Marxism offers a most fruitful method of interpreting the past, and can be used to predict the future. Individuals may violate the interests or the ideologies of their class, but the eccentricities of individuals can be ignored by sociology ; like physics, it can base itself on statistical probabilities. Ruling classes always view the world largely in terms of their class

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

interests ; and if oppressed classes fail to do so, it is because they are dominated by the ideologies of their rulers. The reduction of idealistic pretensions to terms of class greed is apt to seem brutally cynical ; but the effectiveness of this key to political problems abundantly justifies itself in experience.

Marxists, however, like scientists of other kinds, have often been guilty of erecting a method into a dogma. Because sociological phenomena can be largely explained in terms of economics, it has been assumed that they are wholly economic. This assumption is unjustified.

That the economic interpretation has its limitations becomes plain when it is applied to the motivations of individuals. In any organized society the basic economic needs play a relatively small part in directly determining individual behaviour. Men are governed also by a desire for power and by drives which are sexual in origin ; and their egoistic impulses are normally modified by a need for social approval and for self-justification in terms of an objective ideal. The validity of the Marxist method is due to the fact that individuals are members of a society. Economic factors govern social systems and the main outlines of accepted codes of beliefs, and the non-economic activities of individuals occur within an economically determined framework. A millionaire engaged in doubling his fortune is not governed by a desire for food, clothing and shelter, or even for money for its own sake ; his mode of activity, nevertheless, is a product of the economic system. Under feudalism equivalent motivations produced a crusader or an archbishop. A volunteer dying in an imperialist war may be sacrificing himself in a spirit of the purest idealism, yet it was economic greed which created the situation in which he found himself. Though, however, non-economic drives usually take their directives from the economic system, it does not follow that they do not have an independent reality or that sociology can safely ignore them. The economic needs are the most fundamental, in that they must be satisfied first ; but human happiness depends on much more than on economic security. Nor would the abolition of economic conflicts necessarily prevent conflicts of other kinds ; love of power and sexual jealousy are, under capitalism, associated with property rights, but this does not mean that they would disappear if property rights were abolished.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Similarly the fact that an ideology can be largely reduced to terms of class interest does not prove that it is wholly determined by it. Marx himself (though not his Russian disciples who distinguish proletarian from bourgeois mathematics) believed in the objectivity of science ; and if there are scientific truths which are independent of class relationships, a similar claim may be made for truths of æsthetics, morality and religion. The content of works of art is often an expression of attitudes which have their origin in economic conflicts, but the æsthetic impulse itself, the laws which govern the formal organization of art, and the recording of types of experience which recur under any social system are independent of economics.[1]

Concrete ethical imperatives, regulating property or sexual relationships, vary in different social systems, but the ultimate bases of morality—self-awareness and self-control and recognition of other individuals as ends and not as means—are not economic. Even in religious or metaphysical ideologies there is usually a residue of objective truth which defies economic interpretation. Marxism itself, indeed, becomes unintelligible unless it is regarded as an attempt to transcend class ideologies and arrive at human truths.

What has been asserted is merely that, as a matter of scientific fact, economic factors determine social organization, and that the beliefs and activities of individuals will tend to become harmonious with the social organization. Recognition of these truths does not result in any system of values. Marxists believe that societies can be judged by the criterion of economic efficiency, and that economic progress causes cultural development ; but these beliefs cannot be deduced from the economic interpretation of history. Economic needs require satisfaction ; but above the primitive requirements

---

[1]Marxist critics treat Shakespeare as a spokesman of the rising bourgeoisie. If he were merely this, then he would be of interest only to the historian. But the value of *Hamlet* lies not in its portrayal of a specific social situation—a situation which, so far from being bourgeois, belonged to that more primitive stage in human development when vengeance was still the duty of the individual—but in its study of a type of human experience which may recur in any social situation.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of food, clothing and shelter, these needs are highly elastic. Conceivably a relatively low level of economic technique may promote a high degree of cultural creativity. Individual freedom is a necessary condition for cultural development ; and it may be argued that there is more freedom in a society based on private property widely distributed than in a society, whether capitalist or collectivist, based on large-scale industry. The city-state corresponds to a relatively primitive phase in economic technique ; yet the city-state has always proved to be more stimulating to creative activity than the nation or the empire. We may believe, perhaps, that the dynamism of economic interest makes the growth of large-scale organizations inevitable ; but we may still deduce a Spenglerian rather than a Marxian conclusion.

An instructive parallel can be drawn between the method of Marx and that of Freud. The achievement of each man was to take one of the primal impulses of human nature, to show how it assumed disguised expressions in idealistic sublimations and ideological superstructures, and thereby to make men conscious of their real needs and desires. Each man can be criticized for denying all independent reality to æsthetic and intellectual constructions, and for interpreting all human activity in terms of a single basic physical urge. In Freud the sexual impulse, and in Marx economic need, are given such broad meanings that they almost lose their specifically sexual and economic characters and become identical with the undifferentiated flow of human vitality.[1]

A thorough-going economic interpretation of history implies that there can be no universal, moral or political ideals. An ideal is merely an expression of a class-interest, and different classes will evolve different ideals between which there can be no reconciliation. For the proletariat, for example, capitalist profits consist of the surplus value created by the workers and stolen by the bourgeoisie ; for the bourgeoisie, on the other hand, they are the legitimate rewards of enterprise and organizing ability. Where then, after denying the possibility of general standards of desirability, does Marxism contrive to find political values? How can it show that certain social changes are good and that those who oppose them

[1]After writing this paragraph I discovered that a similar comparison had been made in the pages of *Scrutiny* by Mr. E. W. F. Tomlin.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are to be condemned?

Marxism endeavours to evade this problem by proving that Communism is inevitable. Partly by means of metaphysical doctrine, and partly by an analysis of the economics of capitalism, it purports to show that the victory of the proletariat, and the consequent creation of a Communist society, are objective necessities which can be scientifically predicted. Marxism assumes, moreover, that the real is the rational, and that all human values are derived from objective social conditions ; there can therefore be no distinction between what must happen and what ought to happen. This monistic point of view appears to do some violence to human nature ; but it is buttressed, somewhat inconsistently, by the belief that there is an absolute law of development and that development in human society can be measured by the satisfaction of economic needs. Communism is thus desirable because it is inevitable and inevitable because it is desirable. Social processes are sometimes explained in terms of metaphysical and economic forces of which human beings are merely the instruments ; at other times it is implied that the economic needs of human beings are the original dynamic force in history, and that Communism is inevitable because it means the satisfaction of those economic needs. This combination of contradictory viewpoints is an essential part of Marxism and one of the chief sources of its strength. Emphasis on desirability alone would provoke arguments as to whether Communism was actually better than other systems ; emphasis on inevitability alone would lead to a fatalistic passivism. By fusing both conceptions, at a sacrifice of logical coherence, Marxism provides itself with an answer to any kind of criticism.

The metaphysical arguments for the inevitability of Communism are derived from the Hegelian dialectic. It has sometimes been doubted that Marx himself used the dialectic in this fashion, but it was undoubtedly so used by Engels, and afterwards by Lenin ; and it has become a part of orthodox Marxist apologetics.[1]

---

[1]The chief exponent of the opinion that Marx did not preach dialectical materialism is Professor Sidney Hook. Professor Hook appreciates the absurdities of dialectical materialism and, perhaps, over-estimates Marx's intelligence in assuming that he must have

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Marxist philosophy of dialectical materialism originated as an attempt to reconcile materialism and idealism. The materialism of the eighteenth century, with its belief in mechanistic determinism and its conception of the human mind as the passive recipient of sense impressions, had been unable to explain the capacity of the human mind to distinguish between truth and error, to organize sense impressions into systems, and to change the world through creative activity. Such difficulties had resulted in the growth of German idealism, which had taken as its starting-point the activity of mind and which—in contrast with the determinists who had interpreted mind mechanistically—had explained the capacity of the mind to discover truth by interpreting matter idealistically. Dialectical materialism abandoned idealistic interpretations of the universe, regarding mind as a product of matter, but at the same time it retained the idealistic belief in the activity of mind. Human beings were not merely the mechanically-determined products of natural processes ; they were also capable of creative action upon the world. Such a conception involved epistemological difficulties as to the relation of mind to matter, but these difficulties were brushed aside by Marx as of no practical importance. Man proved the truth of his ideas by testing them in practice.

The Marxists, however, have not been content with this pragmatic attitude. They have also retained from the idealism of Hegel a number of metaphysical doctrines which are incompatible with materialism. Hegel emphasized the weaknesses of mechanistic determinism—in particular, its inability to account for novelty and growth—and used them as arguments for idealism. The universe was supposed to be the expression of a divine mind, and the laws

---

been aware of them. Passages from Marx's writings can be quoted in support of this interpretation ; but Marx was not a very consistent thinker. According to Professor Hook Marx was almost a pragmatist, and his system of thought was determined by the class interests of the proletariat. Professor Hook abandons, therefore, the doctrine of inevitability. This attitude, like all varieties of pragmatism, is open to the objection that the ultimate interest or value by which intellectual operations are guided remains somewhat arbitrary. Why is the viewpoint of the proletariat preferable to that of the bourgeoisie?

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of thought were also the laws of things; by examining mental processes one could thus arrive at a genuine understanding of material realities. According to Hegel the universe was a unity whose parts were in constant movement and were constantly interacting upon each other. In studying movement and change the human mind discovered contradictions, and these contradictions were objective realities; the universe was built out of pairs of opposites. Change was real; and since the universe was the expression of a divine mind, change could be viewed eulogistically, as development. Such changes were of two kinds: a change in quantity might become a change in quality; and two opposites might be synthesized into a higher unity. The human mind arrived at truth by synthesizing opposite conceptions, each of which was partially true; and this 'dialectical' process was characteristic also of the divine mind by which matter was animated. Thus the chief dialectical laws were those of interaction, of the unity of opposites, of novelty, and of development.

When Marx, according to his own statement, turned the dialectic right side up and interpreted it materialistically, there was no longer any justification for assuming that the laws of thought could be used to interpret nature. Obviously the doctrine that mind is material cannot mean that mental and physical processes are identical; there is still a difference between psychology and physics, just as there is between organic and inorganic matter. The Hegelian dialectic continued to have a negative value; the weaknesses of mechanistic materialism which had been emphasized by the idealists still existed. But the positive doctrines of Hegelianism no longer had any justification. Thus the real significance of the dialectical laws, when they are combined with a materialistic philosophy, is that they formulate those situations where chains of cause and effect cannot be discovered. In so far as they still have meaning, they are the limitations to scientific method. They do not enable us to predict the future, they show under what conditions the future cannot be predicted. They apply not to objective realities but to the methods by which the human mind apprehends those realities. Beyond this they degenerate into mystical verbiage. It is, however, precisely in this mystical verbiage that Marxism discovers its metaphysical arguments for predicting the inevitability of Communism.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The method of science is to isolate phenomena and thereby to discover invariable sequences of events. This, however, is impossible to the extent that the universe is characterized by interaction. When a number of different forces are all interacting upon each other, it is impossible to isolate any chains of cause and effect. In the natural sciences the interaction is often small, and a sufficient degree of isolation can usually be artificially created for experimental purposes. In sociology, however, no such isolation is possible. Different individuals, classes and nations, factors of economics, politics and philosophy, are all constantly interacting upon each other. Sociology, therefore, can never become an exact science. Every phenomenon must be studied in relation to the total situation, and our reading of events must be based not so much on scientific method as on a capacity to grasp the meaning of a situation, of a kind which is more intuitive than logical. The dialectical law of interaction is thus a warning against any excessive use of scientific method in human affairs. In practice—and this was a meaning frequently given to it by Lenin—it means reliance on common sense rather than on theory.

The law of the unity of opposites means partly that in attempting to describe movement and change the human mind discovers contradictions and partly that material phenomena can be analysed into opposing forces. The former of these meanings has reference merely to certain verbal paradoxes which have no practical importance. Thus, when an object is moving, it both is, and is not, in a particular place at a particular moment ; or when a man is becoming bald, there is a moment when he can be described as both bald and not bald. Such contradictions, which have fascinated metaphysicians since the time of Zeno, are merely tricks of verbal legerdemain. That opposite forces can often be distinguished at work in nature is an objective fact and not a verbal paradox. It cannot, however, be assumed that all phenomena are unities of opposites ; whether they are or are not is a matter for investigation. In practice, most phenomena can be analysed not merely into a single pair of opposites but into a much larger number of different forces. It is merely a metaphor to apply the word ' opposite ' to many of the contradictions which Marxists discover with such profusion in nature—to the ' opposition ' between life and matter, for example, or between animals and their environment. Marxists

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

frequently become intoxicated with a mystical passion for discovering opposites everywhere and show themselves incapable of distinguishing between mental operations and objective natural processes. Engels, for example, believed that the fact that two minuses made a plus was an example of a dialectical process actually at work in nature. But the fact that $a - b(c - b)$ is another way of saying $a - bc + b^2$ tells us nothing about the external world.

The dialectical emphasis on the appearance of novelties has a negative value, in that it involves a denial of materialistic determinism. The universe cannot be wholly explained in terms of mechanistic causation; genuine change is possible. Thus quantitative changes may become qualitative; when water reaches a certain degree of heat it changes into steam.[1] Of greater significance is the fact that a whole, such as a living organism, may be more than the sum of its parts. Matter, organized in a certain way, becomes a living creature; a living creature operates in accordance with laws which differ from those which apply to the matter of which it is composed. Dialectical materialism does not, however, enable us to understand such changes, nor can they be predicted when we have no previous experience of them; the manner in which matter becomes organized into new compounds, with new properties, remains mysterious. Marxism endeavours to explain novelty and growth by means of its doctrine of opposites. A thesis is negated by its antithesis, which is followed by a negation of the negation, in other words by a synthesis. A seed dies, and from its death springs new life. Such statements are merely metaphors, which explain nothing. The original core of truth in this verbiage was the fact that the human mind often discovers truth by synthesizing contradictory ideas. This process can also be traced in the pedulum swing of action and reaction between

[1]The chief fallacy in Marx's prophecy of a Kingdom of Freedom, to be achieved through state socialism, lies in his failure to take account of a change of this kind. When half-a-dozen men work together, there may be both co-operation and freedom; extend the principle to an entire nation, and there is a qualitative change; bureaucracy and dictatorship become necessary. Genuine freedom is possible only in a society of small units, with a minimum of centralized control.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

opposing tendencies in society. But it cannot be applied to nature unless one believes, with Hegel, in the immanence of a divine mind.

Similarly dependent upon belief in a divine mind is the dialectical law of development—a law which, according to Lenin, is 'absolute.' This Hegelian conception was an inheritance from the Christian tradition, and in particular from the mystico-heretical faith in a coming Age of the Holy Ghost when men would obey the impulses of God in their hearts, and laws and institutions would become unnecessary—when, in other words, the state would wither away and mankind would enter the Kingdom of Freedom. But for a materialist there can be no absolute law of development. A materialist has no objective standards by which he can measure growth and decay ; he can assess events only in human terms which have no cosmic validity. Development, moreover, can be absolute only if time is limited ; an endless development is impossible ; if time is infinite, then cosmic processes must be cyclic. Actually Marxists judge development by the standard of economic power. This, however, is a human value, which can claim no metaphysical support ; and since the only justification for such a standard is the assumption that human behaviour is primarily governed by economic need, there is no reason for supposing that development of this kind is inevitable. Economic growth may be prevented by objective natural conditions—an exhaustion of the world's raw material, for example, or thwarted by destructive conflicts and by a failure of human intelligence to solve them. The course of human history has not hitherto been characterized by any unilinear development. On the contrary a dozen different civilizations have progressed up to a point and then degenerated.

In so far, therefore, as the dialectical philosophy is true, it offers no support for Communism ; and in so far as it serves to justify Communism, it is not true. It is true that the universe is characterized by interaction, and that natural and historical processes exhibit certain discontinuities which cannot be described in terms of mechanistic causation. It is not true that the universe is composed of pairs of opposites, that these opposites tend always to become synthesized into higher unities, and that development is absolute. It is true that society can be analysed into a number of different interacting forces, that the clash of these forces must produce constant changes, and that such changes may be qualitative

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and dialectical and not merely quantitative and mechanistic. But there is no metaphysical justification for dividing society into a single pair of opposites—bourgeoisie and proletariat—or for assuming that their conflict must produce the higher synthesis of Communism.[1]

The economic arguments for the inevitability of Communism were, according to Marx, the result of an open-minded study of capitalism. By purely economic investigations Marx purported to show that society was divided into two classes, that the gulf between them would grow steadily broader, and that the proletariat must eventually seize power and expropriate the bourgeoisie ; if this analysis proved to corroborate the Hegelian philosophy, that was not because Marx had studied capitalism in Hegelian terms ; it was because that philosophy was unescapably true.

This assertion may be doubted. There are errors in the Marxist analysis of capitalism—errors which have been of enormous practical importance—and these errors appear to have originated in an attempt to prove that society conformed to the Hegelian formulæ.

In the first place society is not, and never has been, divided into a single pair of opposites. This is plain enough in the case of pre-capitalist systems. The French Revolution, for example, was certainly no conflict between opposites. The emergent bourgeoisie were not in any intelligible sense the ' opposite ' of the feudal aristocracy. The purpose of the Revolution was to expel from the body politic a privileged class which had become parasitical, and the groups who achieved this can be roughly classified as wealthy bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, proletariat and peasants. In capitalist society the proletariat may perhaps be regarded as the ' opposite ' of the bourgeoisie, but to view capitalism in terms

[1]Lenin discovered a class struggle—*i.e.*, a ' conflict ' between positive and negative electricity—in every particle of matter, and used it as an argument for Communism. If, however, we are to deduce our politics from our physics, it would seem that we should be Fascists rather than Communists. Negative electricity does not destroy positive electricity ; matter is composed of the two together, in perpetual ' conflict.' This resembles the Fascist theory of the state.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of a single class-conflict is dangerously misleading. A realistic sociology must take account also of the persistence of farmer peasant and petty bourgeois elements, of the growth of a salaried middle class, and of the various conflicts of interest between skilled and unskilled workers which are concealed by the abstraction 'proletariat.' By analogy with the French Revolution, the true object of twentieth-century revolutionary movements should be, perhaps, not to give power to a single class, but to overthrow a privileged class which has become parasitical—the bankers, monopolists, and wealthy rentiers. It was the refusal of Marxists prior to 1935 to take account of such facts which was the primary cause for the victory of Fascism. By forcing all non-proletarian elements to classify themselves as either for the dictatorship of the proletariat or against it they drove the majority of them into an alliance with finance-capitalism.

In the second place the gulf between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is not becoming broader. The Marxist prophecy of increasing misery among the working class is based on certain economic fallacies which few, even among the Marxists, to-day take seriously. Capital, according to Marx, was divided into the variable capital used to pay wages and the constant capital used to buy new means of production ; according to the theory of surplus value all profits were made on the variable capital ; as the capitalist system progressed, however, the proportion of constant capital would increase, the result being that the rate of profit on the total capital would diminish, and in order to prevent it from disappearing, the capitalists would be compelled to lower the wages and intensify the exploitation of the workers. The chief weakness of this argument is the assumption that profits are extracted from the workers, so that the lower the wage, the higher the profit ; actually profits are extracted from the consumer, and the rate of profit depends on the market.[1] It should be added, moreover, that if capitalism is viewed as a unit the distinction between constant and variable capital is meaningless—ultimately all capital is variable—and that the Marxist theory makes the fact that capitalists do increase the

[1]The theory—now adopted by most left-wing economists—that capitalist crises are caused by low consuming power comes not from Marx but from Mr. J. A. Hobson.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

proportion of constant capital, and do so in the expectation of larger profits, quite inexplicable. As a matter of historical fact the working class have become more insecure but not more miserable ; and even their insecurity has been considerably modified by state intervention. The Marxist vision of two opposites, a bourgeoisie growing richer and fewer and a proletariat growing more miserable and more numerous, culminating in a catastrophic dialectical transference of power, is further from realization than when Marx wrote.

In the third place the proletariat is not in its nature a revolutionary class ; it may, more easily than other classes, be converted to revolutionary ideals, but it is not, as Marx asserted, revolutionary by virtue of its economic status. It is dangerous to draw analogies between the working class movement to-day and the rise of the bourgeoisie before the French Revolution. The bourgeoisie were engaged in constructing a new social order, the growth of which was impeded by Feudal survivals but which was wholly independent of feudalism. The working class, on the other hand, are a part of capitalism ; their natural tendency is to fight not for a new kind of system but for a different distribution of profits under the existing system. According to Marx socialism was not an intellectual invention but a real force objectively active in society. Actually, however, the combination of socialism with the working class movement has always been an alliance rather than an identity. The primary-purpose of the working class movement has always been to win higher wages and better living conditions under capitalism ; and to the extent that it accomplishes this, it becomes—as in the United States and, to a lesser degree, in Great Britain and in the Germany of the Weimar Republic—a conservative rather than a revolutionary force. Insecurity may make the working classes converts to socialism, but this is almost equally true of the middle classes. *Bona fide* revolutionary socialism, as distinct from social-democratic reformism, probably has as many supporters among the middle classes as inside the trade unions.

That a revolutionary transformation of society is not inevitable does not mean either that it is impossible or that it is undesirable ; it means, however, that the argument for it must be stated in terms of value rather than of metaphysical and economic fatalism. And though such an approach is condemned by all disciples of the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

master as utopian, it is, in reality, true to the spirit of Marxism. The question of motive is consistently ignored in Marxist literature. Marx became a socialist before he set out to discover cosmic support for his faith ; his own conversion was an expression of moral idealism, and his writings are shot through with a moral indignation against the injustices of capitalism. It is its Hebraic passion for social justice, and not its dreary and often fallacious chains of reasoning, which has made *Das Kapital* the bible of twentieth-century revolution.

The future is partly determined and partly contingent. The economic interpretation of history defines the limits within which choice is effectively possible ; we cannot expect, for example, that a privileged class should abandon its privileges without a struggle, or that the tendency of capitalism towards monopoly should be reversed and the *laisser-faire* competition of Cobdenism re-established. Economic determinism is not, however, absolute, nor is it inevitable that private capitalism be followed by centralized state capitalism on the Russian model. Classes are not governed directly by their economic interests but by those interests as interpreted by the intelligence and modified by ideals ; and to the extent that actions are influenced by ideologies, there lies the possibility of altering the course of history. The battle between Communism and Fascism, for example, is inexplicable in purely economic terms. It is a struggle not merely between classes but also between rival ideologies, between the idea of racial imperialism and that of the classless society, in which the original core of economic conflict becomes almost invisible.

It remains true, as the Marxists have insisted, that an idea is futile unless it is embodied in an interest ; but it does not follow that the idea is a mere reflection of the interest or that the interest alone has reality. The idea is always broader ; it must, in fact, claim universality, for without such a claim to universality no interest can act with full self-confidence. Human beings, in other words, are not governed solely by the economic interests of their class ; they also have a sense of the unity of the race and of the role of humanity in the cosmos. All movements which have played any important part in history have done so because they have fused an economic interest with a universal ideal, and have been of lasting significance to the extent that they have set the ideal

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

above the interest. Eighteenth-century liberalism would have been futile if it had not corresponded to the interest of the bourgeoisie, but it was no mere reflection of that interest. Its ideal of a universal personal freedom was broader than the bourgeois demand for a free market. It was an expression of an ultimate ethical ideal—the sense that human beings should be ends and not means—and it was occasionally capable of enforcing that value even when it conflicted with bourgeois economic interest. It was his loyalty to the same value which made Marx a socialist. By proclaiming as its goal the emancipation of humanity Marxism sanctifies the economic struggle of exploited classes and endeavours to transform the working class movement, which in itself is merely a movement for better conditions under capitalism, into a crusade for a world in which human beings shall not be treated merely as instruments of the economic machine. But if this moral basis constitutes the real appeal of Marxism, its refusal to make that basis explicit is, correspondingly, its cardinal weakness. For a movement which rests merely on the economic interest of a class and which finds its justification not in ethical values but in historic fatalism cannot win loyalty and self-sacrifice, even among the class to which it appeals ; and when it proceeds to the building of a new social order, it will be likely to violate that sense of the freedom and dignity of individual men and women which constitutes the only valid reason for demanding the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a classless society.

H. B. PARKES.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# BAUDELAIRE

## I.

BAUDELAIRE is in many ways so remote from us—we do not like his age, nor his more obvious reactions against the age—that we need, I think, to be specially careful when we study him. It is easy to mistake his word and gesture.

For example, it is sometimes assumed that, because he frequently mentions the devil, he was not only a Christian, but a sort of Christian ascetic ; or, to use the humbler and more appropriate term, a Puritan. A number of well-known poems can be taken to imply this ; and there are notorious phrases from the *Journals*, such as: *Faire l'amour, c'est faire le mal.* But it will be suggested in this paper that the poems, if they are not to be largely emptied of their meaning, cannot be read in this way ; and as for the *Journals*, it may be doubted whether they can be appropriately discussed by a critic at all. They are rather matter for the psychologist or the biographer. Baudelaire had not that habit of systematic reflection, at least on moral subjects, which alone makes *obiter dicta* immediately instructive: in his case they tend to be accompanied by sound and smell, rather than by light. They are explosions, provoked by a momentary joy or pain. It is they which need to be interpreted with the aid of considered utterances such as the poems, rather than the other way round.

If we read the poems closely, we see that Baudelaire does not always talk about the same kind of devil. One he describes as above all cunning—*rusé, savant*—and his sole business is to deceive ; another can spare himself this labour, for he has the power of a despot over slaves ; while yet a third is a sort of honest merchant, the excellent quality of whose wares secures him clients. The importance of these distinctions is that whereas the first devil is a part of Christian tradition, which has satisfied centuries of thinking men ; the second and third are drawn—ultimately perhaps from the Manichees, but immediately—from the Satanist or diabolist poets, who have satisfied few men but themselves.

Accordingly, the quality of Baudelaire's poetry making mention of the devil varies considerably. At times he does not much differ from Swinburne, at least in the paradoxical mood.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

O Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère!
Toi dont la large main cache les précipices
Au somnambule errant au bord des édifices . . .
Toi qui, magiquement, assouplis les vieux os
De l'ivrogne attardé foulé par les chevaux . . .
Toi qui, pour consoler l'homme frêle qui souffre
Nous appris a mêler le salpêtre et le soufre . . .

and so on. There is no clear reason why such benefits as the above should be attributed to Satan ; nor why—if they exist: if the sleep-walker has a special immunity from precipitation, or the senile drunkard from pounding under horses' feet—they should be singled out for praise. It is true that gunpowder may console, but that is not its obvious purpose. In such verses as these Baudelaire is not only intending to astonish, he is content with doing so ; he is irresponsible in his writing ; he cannot therefore be taken seriously.

There are however other verses about the devil which are highly serious ; and yet others which, while not ostentatiously trivial like the above, do not carry conviction. Perhaps it is best to call them, simply, poor: and if they are poor, Baudelaire's skill being what it is, it must be that he is dishonest—either with himself or with the reader. These two kinds of verses can, I think, be illustrated from the introductory poem to the *Fleurs du Mal*, where they are somewhat curiously juxtaposed.

The opening stanzas I would call highly serious. The adjectives trim their nouns to the exact shape required, and at times to a pin point ; the images not only arrest, but retain and satisfy the attention. The subject, human levity, is one with which we are well acquainted.

La sottise, l'erreur, le péché, la lésine,
Occupent nos esprits et travaillent nos corps,
Et nous alimentons nos aimables remords
Comme les mendiants nourrissent leur vermine.

Nos péchés sont têtus, nos repentirs sont lâches,
Nous nous faisons payer grassement nos aveux,
Et nous rentrons gaiement dans le chemin bourbeux,
Croyant par de vils pleurs laver toutes nos taches.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Man's folly and ignorance are mentioned first, because they alone explain the facility of his remorse, and the vanity of his pursuits. Rather than solid and durable goods, he chooses those which are unsubstantial and fleeting ; his energies are therefore dissipated, and his will enfeebled. And in this he is encouraged by the devil, who maintains the supply of unsubstantial goods.

> Sur l'oreiller du mal c'est Satan Trismégiste
> Qui berce longuement notre esprit enchanté,
> Et le riche métal de notre volonté
> Est tout vaporisé par ce savant chimiste.

In these lines, the devil is the devil of Christianity. But it is not necessary to be a Christian to see in human experience a succession of problems, subtle enough to be worthy of a malign intelligence ; and serious enough for a wrong answer to ruin the nature of man.

In the first line of the next stanza, however, the devil is transformed into the despot of the diabolists:

> C'est le Diable qui tient les fils qui nous remuent!

Moral problems would thus seem to vanish from experience, and responsibility for action be lifted from human shoulders. But, lest man should appear blameless, Baudelaire hastens to accuse him of another failing. He is no longer frivolous, but perverse. He is not only forced on evil, but, says Baudelaire, he also chooses it and longs for it as such. Precise attention to the meaning of 'choose' and of ' evil ' would show this to be impossible, were not precision the last thing with which Baudelaire is now concerned.

> Ainsi qu'un débauché pauvre qui baise et mange
> Le sein martyrisé d'une antique catin,
> Nous volons au passage un plaisir clandestin
> Que nous pressons bien fort comme une vieille orange.

The adjectives no longer sharpen but, if anything, blunt their nouns. That a debauchee should be poor serves to lighten, rather than deepen any horror inspired by his partner ; that an orange is old is an obvious reason why—if no other fruit can be obtained—it should be well squeezed. A few lines earlier the reader was informed that men take the path to hell *sans horreur*: it is not therefore clear why the pleasures which they snatch should be

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clandestine. An increasing disorder in the poet's ideas becomes apparent through lines like

> Et, quand nous respirons, la Mort dans nos poumons
> Descend, fleuve invisible, avec de sourdes plaintes

—which are not only obscure in themselves, but irrelevant to the context—and the Swinburnian exuberance of the following:

> Mais parmi les chacals, les panthères, les lices,
> Les singes, les scorpions, les vautours, les serpents,
> Les monstres glapissants, hurlants, grognants, rampants
> Dans la ménagerie infâme de nos vices,
> Il en est un plus laid, plus méchant, plus immonde!

Obviously the intention is to arouse disgust. But, it seems necessary to ask, why cannot Baudelaire fulfil this intention, except by heaping together nouns and adjectives? This defeats its own end ; and if he really felt disgust, it may be assumed from the rest of his work that he would communicate it forcibly and concisely. Perhaps then, in spite of his protestations, he is not unduly disturbed at the prospect of vice ; perhaps, as was suggested above, he is not altogether sincere. And if so he has adopted not only a devil from the diabolists, but their manner of thinking and writing too. Under cover of reproaching Satan, these poets not infrequently express a private satisfaction with their lot ; they acquiesce in a way of life, which conscience or convention allows them to acknowledge only if they brand it as evil. But the branding is no painful operation, their iron is cold.

Some such diagnosis as this would seem to be confirmed when the vice, to which Baudelaire reserved preeminence in the lines last quoted, is finally introduced. It is ennui: not accidie, the most terrible of the soul's maladies, which renders all action impossible ; but boredom, such as afflicts the soul when an infinite variety of actions seems possible. To none is it compelled or attracted in a distinguishable degree ; it craves therefore (like Nero) an unheard-of excitement:

> Il ferait volontiers de la terre un débris
> Et dans un bâillement il avalerait le monde.

Compared with this vice there is none other, the text implies, which may not be condoned ; it is a sufficient excuse for *le viol, le poison,*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*le poignard, l'incendie* that they were undertaken to stifle a yawn.

This is levity very similar to that with which the poem started: but the poem is no longer about levity, it is light and frivolous itself. The last line

Hypocrite lecteur,—mon semblable,—mon frère!

reads in its original context somewhat differently from the passage in which it is quoted in *The Waste Land*. It is not yet a cry for sympathy in pains, but a hint of partnership in pleasures. These are not such as to be creditable, and one knowing fellow gives another knowing fellow a dig in the ribs.

## II.

Before basing any general conclusion about Baudelaire's poetry on his statements about the devil, it would thus be necessary to classify these statements into groups; for they are by no means of a kind, either in what they say, or how they say it. And when this labour is over it might appear that none of these groups is large enough to support a general statement. That at any rate is what I fear.

I do so largely because I feel that the striking character of Baudelaire's verse is the way it deals, not with supernatural but with natural existences. Baudelaire is I think remarkable, not so much for the converse he may have had with spirits, fallen or erect; but for the closeness with which he observed, and the care with which he analysed, his converse with men and things of this earth. And if he was a Christian, I would say it was because this observation and analysis convinced him that Christianity was true. At any rate, in reading Baudelaire I have found it useful to have in my mind, not doctors of the supernatural to whom he is frequently compared—Dante or Tertullian, for example—but rather the Anglican Bishop Butler: who in his Sermons studies the natural world, and especially human nature, in the endeavour to propagate his faith.

In particular, in preparing this paper, two doctrines of Butler's have frequently occurred to me. They are, first, that human nature is not 'one simple, uniform thing;' and secondly, that for its happiness and misery, indeed for its very existence, it is dependent on an external world. It is not simple because, says Butler, it

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

consists of ' appetites, particular passions and affections ; ' and it is dependent, because each of these passions and affections is directed, not upon the self, but upon external objects. A hungry man, in so far as he is hungry, cannot be satisfied with anything within himself, but only with food ; a thirsty man craves a potable liquid ; ambition will rest only in the esteem or respect of others, benevolence only in their well-being—and these, if not material, are none the less external to the ambitious or benevolent person. Human nature, in other words, is necessarily engaged in commerce with an outside world ; and, by the first doctrine, this commerce is multifarious, conducted not by a single agent but by many. Each agent pursues a different kind of object—some physical, some immaterial and spiritual ; but in human life each plays a necessary, and may play a proper part. To see that each plays this part and no other, Butler would say, is virtue and happiness ; while vice and misery result from disorder. But this is not immediately relevant to my purpose.

If we take the second of the above doctrines, it might I think be illustrated from Baudelaire, or used to illustrate him, in some such ways as the following.

The external world is of the greatest importance in his poetry. Not only do sense-impressions so crowd his lines as at times almost to embarrass the reader—

> La nuit s'épaississait ainsi comme une cloison—

they do so because they are of significance for his moral life. He recognizes that it is by their occasion his life will be either maimed or perfected. They announce the presence of objects, for which the desire may be untimely or tempestuous ; in that case temptation will need to be resisted :

> Et son bras et sa jambe, et sa cuisse et ses reins,
> Polis comme de l'huile, onduleux comme un cygne,
> Passaient devant mes yeux clairvoyants et sereins ;
> Et son ventre et ses seins, ces grappes de ma vigne,
>
> S'avançaient plus calins que les anges du mal,
> Pour troubler le repos où mon âme était mise,
> Et pour la déranger du rocher de cristal,
> Où calme et solitaire elle s'était assise.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Or they may foretell the thwarting of a desire by the decay of an object ; therefore, by meditation on this event, the desire is to be moderated:

> Les mouches bourdonnaient sur ce ventre putride,
> D'où sortaient de noirs bataillons
> De larves, qui coulaient comme un épais liquide
> Le long de ces vivants haillons.
> Tout cela descendait, montait comme une vague . . .
> Et pourtant vous serez semblable à cette ordure,
> A cette horrible infection,
> Etoile de mes yeux, soleil de ma nature,
> Vous, mon ange at ma passion!

Passages of this kind, covering all the senses and a wide gamut in every sense, are so frequent as to make his work appear a sort of inventory or catalogue: drawn up, it might be said, to guard against surprise from the external world. He wishes to be prepared for any action which, as he is inevitably in commerce with that world, it may be proper for him to take. He may not always, and indeed often does not take it, but at least he is aware that he should do so.

The main virtue of a catalogue is its exactness; and Baudelaire's can I think be allowed to be exact in a very high degree. In his poetry the external world is as in real life ; it is neutral and public, and not in any way coloured or deformed by his desires. Our desires might have business in it too. If he enumerates more detail than we have observed, that is because his senses are more acute and more alert, not because they are less reliable than ours. Were we not immediately convinced of this as we read, we could not perhaps resist the temptation which is strong, to dismiss at least some of his adventures as nightmares. They are such consequences of the failure to take proper action as it requires fortitude to contemplate. But we see they have occurred under the conditions with which we are acquainted when awake ; we must therefore gather fortitude whence we may.

If we read carefully, we shall do so from the poetry, which is too great merely to disturb. Baudelaire, when he is fully himself, is of an heroic fortitude. And the source of this, once again, would seem to be the external world. The commerce which is natural

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to us is our opportunity of happiness ; and it must remain so, however much through our mismanagement it has yielded misery in the past. The proper action may have become difficult to take, and still more difficult to find, because of previous errors ; yet the external world by its mere existence is a guarantee that the proper action may be taken. In this existence therefore—in the external world as external, before he has attempted profitable commerce with it or after he has attempted and failed—Baudelaire finds a consolation: a promise of happiness which, however conditional, is sufficient to ward off despair.

If the consolation appears small, that is the measure of what I called Baudelaire's heroism. He can be compared to those peasants whom Wordsworth describes as reduced by poverty to

> The pleasure which there is in life itself ;

reduced, that is, to finding a pleasure in mere existence, to that flicker of interest and of hope without which any life is inconceivable. Yet whether because of conscience or mere healthy instinct—whatever the name, the thing is wholly admirable—they do not ' wish not to be.' Nor does Baudelaire, reduced by spiritual rather than physical deprivation to a similar state ; he clings firmly to what little life is left.

Hence what has been described as his catalogue of the external world is not merely a catalogue ; or rather it is not such a catalogue as is drawn up by a dealer, interested merely in the use of objects, or in what they will produce. The author is someone for whom the things in themselves, and even before they have benefited him, possess importance and a value ; if they were pictures we should call him an amateur, if books a scholar. Baudelaire eagerly scans the horizon, like his own sentinel

> Qui guette nuit et jour brick, tartane ou frégate
> Dont les formes au loin frissonnent dans l'azur:

but with this difference: the *frissonnement* itself, as an appearance in and part of the external world, has a value for him, apart from what it may signify for his immediate future. It arrests his attention, and he transfers it to his verse. In the following lines, the rain is a symbol of all that excludes him from happiness:

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Quand la pluie étalant ses immenses traînées
D'une vaste prison imite les barreaux . . .

but it too is part of the external world, and as such can detain him a moment from his melancholy. Before he returns to this there is a felt pause, and the melancholy becomes deeper for the contrast.

If this latter distinction is thought over-subtle, it should be compared with that drawn by Baudelaire himself in the stanzas already quoted from *Les Bijoux*. The contemplation of his mistress threatens to plunge him into lust which he recognizes as wasteful ; nevertheless he does not on that account desist from the contemplation, or shut his eyes to his mistress. To do so would be to endeavour to exclude from the external what is and must remain a part of it ; and what as such, however near it is bringing misery, may yet be a source of happiness.

But here, it is true, a new factor has come into play. The external world contains objects for the sense which are in themselves either pleasant or repulsive. When he encounters one of the former, such as his mistress, Baudelaire lingers over it as long as possible ; for as both pleasant in itself and as external, it is doubly important: *J'aime avec fureur*, he says,

Les choses où le son se mêle à la lumière.

But even intrinsically unpleasant things, by their character as external, can induce him to linger long enough to comprehend them fully:

Les yeux étaient deux trous, et du ventre effondré
Les intestins pesants lui coulaient sur les cuisses,
Et ses bourreaux, gorgés de hideux délices,
L'avaient à coups de bec absolument châtré.

Because these lines and others of their kind are obviously dictated by something more than disgust, they have sometimes been made the ground for a charge of morbidity, or *morosa delectatio*. To disprove this, it is sufficient to refer to the lines about the vices quoted from the introductory poem ; where, if anything, moroseness dominates. But the present lines give no hint of a secret pleasure, or of a pleasure which masks itself behind vituperation: all that they contain is frank and open.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The last few paragraphs, I am afraid, have not been at all clear ; the transcription of an experience in reading poetry is very difficult. Perhaps I may be allowed a further attempt to illustrate my meaning, from the *Rêve Parisien*. Baudelaire recounts a dream in which he has inhabited a world containing only

> L'enivrante monotonie
> Du métal, du marbre et de l'eau.
>
> Babel d'escaliers et d'arcades,
> C'était un palais infini,
> Plein de bassins et de cascades
> Tombant dans l'or mat ou bruni ;
>
> Et des cataractes pesantes,
> Comme des rideaux de cristal,
> Se suspendaient, éblouissantes,
> A des murailles de métal.

This is often taken as a sort of *Kubla Khan* landscape, and indulgence of the fancy for its own sake. But Baudelaire the mere fantast would be as negligible as Baudelaire the devil-worshipper ; and the truth would seem rather to be that he is recreating himself in the original, not in the modern sense of the term. He is imagining a world in which that minimum life to which, as has been said, he is at times reduced, is of itself a fully satisfying life. It is so in the first place because no other life is possible: time, and the stars that measure time, have ceased, and with them action:

> Nul astre d'ailleurs, nuls vestiges
> De soleil, même au bas du ciel ;

so too has the pursuit of truth, for there is no reasoning, no speech:

> Et sur ces mouvantes merveilles
> Planait (terrible nouveauté!
> Tout pour les yeux, rien pour les oreilles!)
> Un silence d'éternité!

And in the second place all that is offered to the senses is intrinsically pleasant: there is no motion, and therefore no disorder ; no animals nor plants, and therefore no decay. Finally, the external objects in the vision are

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

. . . des prodiges
Qui brillent d'un feu personnel ;

which I take to imply that they are not, as are objects in the real world, mere dead material by means of which a satisfying life is yet to be achieved ; they themselves lead such a life, in which it is possible to share by mere contemplation. The vision however is no more than a vision:

En rouvrant mes yeux pleins de flamme
J'ai vu l'horreur de mon taudis,
Et senti, rentrant dans mon âme,
La pointe des soucis maudits ;

La pendule aux accents funèbres
Sonnait brutalement midi,
Et le ciel versait des ténèbres
Sur ce triste monde engourdi.

To quote Butler: ' We cannot remove from this earth, or change our general business in it ; . . . neither can we alter our real nature.' Baudelaire is the last person to pretend otherwise, and immediately on waking he brushes aside the vision as a

. . . terrible paysage
Que jamais oeil mortel ne vit.

It has served, not as refuge to slacken his efforts in this world, but rather as an ideal by which to intensify them: it is here, if anywhere, that he must achieve the fully satisfying life, in spite of and because of repulsive sights, and the difficulties of right reasoning and right action.

The second of Butler's doctrines has occupied us somewhat too long. The first, it will be remembered, was that human nature is a bundle of, among other things, ' appetites, particular passions and affections.' Butler had already been anticipated in holding this by a number of expressions of common speech ; and these Baudelaire takes over with marked approval. ' L'esprit humain regorge de passions,' he says in *Les Paradis Artificiels* ; ' il en a à revendre, pour me servir d'une autre locution ordinaire.' Further, his poems contain lines such as

. . . vers toi mes désirs partent en caravane.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

That is, he recognizes not only the multiplicity of human passions but what Butler calls their disinterested quality: though they are part of the self they are by no means directed upon it, and therefore for the self's sake may need to be controlled and to be denied. When nevertheless they insist upon satisfaction Baudelaire has other terms for them: they are 'un peuple de démons,' or 'un choeur de vermisseaux.' But a discussion of these terms would be one of the pains of the soul; and this needs to be preceded by a discussion of its pleasures.

## III.

The Infinite Being who created us has, says Butler, provided objects for the satisfaction of all our desires. None of these therefore is in itself evil, and its satisfaction is not only compatible with but a condition of perfect happiness. Paradise is a place where we find 'a supply to all the capacities of our natures.' A desire becomes evil only by insisting on more than its due satisfaction; and then, thwarting other desires, it needs itself to be thwarted. But this thwarting is a character of the disordered, and not of the healthy life. Similarly Baudelaire is—it is not too much to say—haunted by the notion of an existence that shall be as rich and as harmonious as possible; of 'cet état charmant et singulier, où toutes les forces s'équilibrent.'

He finds a symbol of it in the 'admirable et lumineuse promptitude des enfants;' and in youth—

> . . . la sainte jeunesse, à l'air simple, au doux front,
> A l'oeil limpide et clair ainsi qu'une eau courante,
> Et qui va répandant sur tout, insouciante
> Comme l'azur du ciel, les oiseaux et les fleurs,
> Ses parfums, ses chansons, et ses douces chaleurs!

The youthful races of the world, he thinks, enjoyed the same privilege. And once or twice, if only for a moment, it has been his own.

'Il est des jours,' he writes, 'où l'homme s'éveille avec un génie jeune et vigoureux. Ses paupières à peine déchargées du sommeil qui les scellait, le monde extérieur s'offre a lui avec un relief puissant, une netteté de contours, une richesse de couleurs admirables.' That is, part at least of the *Rêve Parisien* is a reality.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But there is more, which did not enter into the dream: ' Le monde moral ouvre ses vastes perspectives, pleines de clartés nouvelles. L'homme, gratifié de cette béatitude, malheureusement rare et passagère, se sent à la fois plus artiste et plus juste, plus noble, pour dire tout en un mot.' This account in prose may be supplemented by the following in verse, in which Baudelaire addresses his soul as Hopkins did the windhover:

Au-dessus des étangs, au-dessus des vallées,
Des montagnes, des bois, des nuages, des mers,
Par delà le soleil, par delà les éthers,
Par delà les confins des sphères étoilées,

Mon esprit, tu te meus avec agilité,
Et, comme un bon nageur qui se pâme dans l'onde,
Tu sillonnes gaiement l'immensité profonde
Avec une indicible et mâle volupté.

This striving is not to an end, for a full and properly ordered activity is an end in itself. In the final stanza therefore the soul is compared to things which rest in themselves, things immobile and mute ; and, to play their part in the figure, they in turn are endowed with the striving of consciousness:

Heureux celui qui peut d'une aile vigoureuse
S'élancer vers les champs lumineux et sereins!

Celui dont les pensers, comme des alouettes,
Vers les cieux le matin prennent un libre essor,
—Qui plane sur la vie, et comprend sans effort
Le langage des fleurs et des choses muettes!

Baudelaire, says Mr. Eliot, is a *poète des départs*. But he is also, and it is perhaps more important, a *poète des arrivées*. He is not one of those whom he ironically describes as ' les vrais voyageurs,'

. . . coeurs légers, semblables aux ballons,
(Qui) sans savoir pourquoi, disent toujours Allons!

Except in the address to Death at the conclusion of this poem (where the ironical intention still continues) he is always fully aware where he wishes to go. It is to the paradise in which a life like the above is lived: ' un vrai pays de Cocagne, où tout

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

est beau, riche, tranquille, honnête ; où le luxe a plaisir à se mirer dans l'ordre.' There ' la cuisine même est poétique . . comme une belle conscience.' All human needs being satisfied in their proper order, the most diverse can be ranked together, as here. If this is felt to be incongruous, it is no more than a device common in mystical poets widely acknowledged to be serious. They transfer to paradise, as to its natural place, the earthly pleasure which at the moment occupies them ; and they claim from paradise the satisfaction of an immediate earthly want. Between such poets and Baudelaire there are some fairly close parallels to be drawn. Herbert, returning from Salisbury, heard cathedral choirs about heaven's gate ; Baudelaire, who delighted in the plastic arts as Herbert in music, saw within that gate

> Des meubles luisants
> Polis par les ans.

Again, Herbert in a moment of exhaustion looked forward to death as ' a chair ' ; to Baudelaire it is

> . . . l'auberge fameuse inscrite sur le livre,
> Où l'on pourra manger, et dormir, et s'asseoir.

## IV.

Baudelaire is thus not of the Puritans, if these, as I assume they do, set apart and prohibit as necessarily evil an object or objects of enjoyment. And in the same way (in addition to all other ways) he is to be distinguished from the Satanists, who are inverted Puritans. They claim to prohibit as evil what they nevertheless enjoy. By definition their enjoyments are disorderly ; Baudelaire's always depend upon the possibility of order.

Nevertheless it might be thought that Swinburne for example is not without a notion of a *pays de Cocagne*. He writes of a garden of Proserpine, where the weary may slumber ; and of a noble, nude and antique world, where the eyes may be refreshed. These are, however, merely refuges, where life may be avoided rather than organized to the full ; places of diversion or relaxation between which Swinburne may choose, and which he may or not visit as he fancies. The *pays de Cocagne* on the other hand is Baudelaire's good, which he cannot but try to reach ; and if he

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fails, there is nowhere else for him to turn—he is condemned to evil and misery. Hence there is a note of urgency in his writing about paradise. unlike anything in Swinburne ; who is never in the least reminiscent of Herbert.

This note deepens to tragedy, as the barriers between Baudelaire and paradise seem to increase. It is heard most clearly perhaps in *Le Voyage a Cythère* ; which also provides the sharpest contrast to Swinburne.

The poem opens with an image with which we are now familiar:

> Mon coeur, comme un oiseau, voltigeait tout joyeux
> Et planait librement autour des cordages ;
> Le navire roulait sous un ciel sans nuages,
> Comme un ange enivré du soleil radieux.

It seems that the paradisal state has already been achieved, in the delights of which the physical universe, and even the ship itself, have a share. But the delights are interrupted by a brief question:

> Quelle est cette île triste et noire?

The answer comes in an off-hand tone, as though to deprecate alarm:

> . . . C'est Cythère,
> Nous dit-on, un pays fameux dans les chansons,
> Eldorado banal de tous les vieux garçons.

The suggestion is that no one on board can be concerned with the doings on the island.

Here it may perhaps be noted that, in this poem, changes of tone are of the utmost importance. It consists entirely of speeches, and is now dialogue, now monologue ; there are no stage-directions, and even the number of speakers is not clear. It is only by a careful observation of tone, therefore, that the speeches can be fitted into their proper relations. Written in this way, the poem gains remarkably in economy and strength ; but also, the degree of that strength is not immediately apparent.

At least one passenger is not wholly reassured, and needs to confirm with his eyes the report which he has heard:

> Regardez, après tout, c'est une pauvre terre.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The phrase *après tout* suggests that the report was not wholly disingenuous ; and as if to confirm this, someone on board breaks into what, by contrast with the lines which precede and follow, can only be called a hymn:

> Belle île aux myrtes verts, pleine de fleurs écloses,
> Vénérée à jamais par toute nation,
> Où les soupirs des coeurs en adoration
> Roulent comme l'encens sur un jardin de roses
> Ou le roucoulement éternal d'un ramier!

To what island is this addressed? If to that in prospect, it would seem, in spite of all reports, well deserving of attention. But this idea is no sooner conceived, than it is extinguished by the curt lines :

> —Cythère n'était plus qu'un terrain des plus maigres,
> Un désert rocailleux troublé par des cris aigres.

The two islands, that in prospect and that of the hymn, have nothing whatever in common ; the ship's company may continue in its aloofness.

The off-hand tone is resumed:

> J'entrevoyais pourtant un objet singulier.

A traveller is about to describe what entertained his idle curiosity for a moment. He begins with a mocking reference to the hymn he has just heard:

> Ce n'était pas un temple aux ombres bocagères . . .

then gives a few casual details:

> . . . voilà qu'en rasant la côte d'assez près
> Pour troubler les oiseaux avec nos voiles blanches . . .

and finally the object itself is described. It is a gibbeted corpse, surrounded by birds and beasts of prey. The lines have already been quoted as an example of Baudelaire's writing at its least casual, and when he is alert to every stimulus of the sense. Accordingly from this point on the poem becomes more and more deeply charged with emotion. The spectacle is first assimilated to one of human justice:

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Une plus grande bête au milieu s'agitait
Comme un exécuteur entouré de ses aides,

then to one of divine. The corpse is seen to be alive, and suffers the pains of purgatory or hell:

Habitant de Cythère, enfant d'un ciel si beau,
Silencieusement tu souffrais ces insultes
En expiation de tes infâmes cultes.

The speaker's sympathies are already warm; soon he identifies himself with the victim:

Ridicule pendu, tes douleurs sont les miennes!

All trace of aloofness has now disappeared.

The physical universe remains as at the beginning of the poem:

Le ciel était charmant, la mer était unie;
Pour moi tout était noir et sanglant désormais—

but the ship's company find it impossible to return to the bliss which they thought they enjoyed. This was not the paradisal, which endures; but only make-believe. As such it crumbled, either before self-examination or before the mere course of events. The company sought to keep all rumours of Cythère from their ship, and to persuade themselves they were made of different stuff from the men of Cythère. But their stuff is the same, and so their lot will be: either they will achieve paradise in the island, and in that case it will blossom as in the hymn; or they must endure the island in its present state, and finally hang in chains. It is not possible to sail away to a Swinburnian refuge.

In the last two lines:

Ah! Seigneur! donnez-moi la force et le courage
De contempler mon coeur and mon corps sans dégout!

the accent falls on *contempler* rather than on *dégout*. They are not a repudiation of the flesh so much as a recognition that the flesh and the desires with which it fills the heart cannot be repudiated. Baudelaire fears that his is too much ravaged to be healed, but he faces the situation as best he may.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

V.

By their frequent satisfaction desires are strengthened, and it is only too easy for them to become strong enough to destroy the equilibrium of our nature, and therefore the possibility of happiness. A desire, says Butler, should not be pursued beyond a certain degree ; for otherwise it 'is always attended with more inconvenience than advantage . . . and often with extreme misery.'

In some cases this degree is imposed by the nature of the object upon which the desire is directed. If it belongs to this world, where '*rien . . . n'est certain . . . tout craque*,' a too insistent desire is exposed to the danger of a shock so grievous as to maim it. Then it will be impossible to look at a human body without seeing behind it a corpse, or to read in the eyes of others friendship or affection, but only a ' secrète horreur du dévouement.'

Again, desires in themselves, and apart from their objects, differ in the esteem in which we hold them. Conscience cannot, for it is a form of the reason, say that any should be wholly neglected ; but some it says are to be cherished more than others. ' There are some, the having of which implies the love of them, when they are reflected upon. This cannot be said of all . . . It were ridiculous to assert that a man upon reflection hath the same kind of approbation of the appetite of hunger, or the passion of fear, as he hath of goodwill to his fellow-creatures.'

Substitute for the appetite of hunger that of the flesh ; and for the goodwill of men the comfort that is to be found in God ; and this quotation becomes immediately applicable to Baudelaire. That men have a need of God, as much and more than of anything else external to themselves, is clear to both Baudelaire and Butler from self-observation, and from the observation of others. ' It is plain that there is a capacity in the nature of man, which neither riches nor honours nor sensual gratifications, nor anything in this world, can perfectly fill up, or satisfy: there is a deeper and more essential want . . . ' And this only the Infinite Being himself can supply. Baudelaire speaks of an infinite within us, needing the infinite which is outside ; and whose demands we can never escape. ' Fuyez l'infini que vous portez en vous,' he calls in scorn to the women of Lesbos ; knowing that they cannot, and that this is their punishment.

This desire for God is the desire of which conscience and the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reason most strongly approve ; therefore for complete happiness, says Butler, its satisfaction must be preferred to that of all others. But in the Baudelaire of the poems other desires are already far too strong to admit of being postponed, for whatever reason. They demand satisfaction here and now, or will secure it by guile.

They can do so because every satisfaction has a moment in which it appears infinite ; and accordingly the inexperienced return for it a *gratitude infinie et sublime*. But, unless it corresponds to the desire of an ordered soul, it brings, not boundless riches, but only a pittance ; it provides, instead of a true infinity to bear up the soul on every side, only a vacuity through which the soul plunges headlong. Baudelaire learns to be on his guard against these gulfs ; but they threaten him at every moment, so that the mere thought of them fills with horror.

> Hélas! tout est abîme,—action, désir, rêve,
> Parole! et sur mon poil qui tout droit se relève
> Mainte fois de la Peur je sens passer le vent.

This is the beginning of the pains of the disordered soul, which take on a thousand forms. His one-time care for the desires now standing between him and God turns to hate: they are not caravans setting out for merchandise, but a chorus of worms launching itself upon a corpse. Hysterically, as in calmer moments he admits, he vituperates the objects of these desires as not only the cause of evil to him in his present circumstances, but as necessarily such a cause at all times to everybody. It is as such a vituperation that '*faire l'amour, c'est faire le mal*' is to be interpreted, and all similar passages in the poems. Then he finds that the desires themselves, not being properly subordinated to the supremely valuable desire, are maimed: he 'eats without hunger, and drinks without thirst' ; finally the desires weaken to such an extent that he falls into accidie. He can do nothing but contemplate, helplessly, his own forlorn state ; he would prefer insensibility—

> Je jalouse le sort des plus vils animaux
> Qui peuvent se plonger dans un sommeil stupide,
> Tant l'écheveau du temps lentement se dévide!

Rescuing himself with an effort he seeks an escape in pride, in the scorn of his fate. But for him to do this, he soon sees, is ludicrous:

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Qui fait le dégouté montre qu'il se croit beau.

The only possible escape is to face the evil of his situation, secure what little good remains, and endeavour slowly to increase it. He has sufficient fortitude for this ; and he was preparing for it, for example, at the end of *Le Voyage a Cythère*.

## VI.

In a brief paper it is impossible to discuss Baudelaire's poems in technical detail ; an Englishman would in any case find it difficult to do so. But technical excellence, as an aspect of precise statement, depends at least partly upon width of experience and clarity of view ; and an effort has been made to indicate these.

They will be found to lie behind any of Baudelaire's poems which make more than a temporary impression on the reader. To refer to a section of his work which has so far received only passing mention, they give force to his satire: to *Le Voyage* for instance, directed against those who, finding comfort in travel, see spiritual significance in the achievement of a Columbus:

Ce matelot ivrogne, inventeur d'Amérique.

Or to *Femmes Damnées*, which is a double satire, at once against those who would limit human happiness to the flesh, and those who, unconscious of limiting themselves thereby, seek to equate the two. They are *des rêveurs inutiles*, who wish

Aux choses de l'amour mêler l'honnêteté.

Whereas, if earthly love may be part of the good life, the good life is not part of earthly love. With some satisfaction, Baudelaire reflects that these dreamers are ignorant (the mind flies to many English poets who were contemporary), not only of what might be the rest of life, but of the flesh itself.

Celui qui veut unir dans un accord mystique
L'ombre avec la chaleur, la nuit avec le jour,
Ne chauffera jamais son corps paralytique
A ce rouge soleil qu'on nomme l'amour!

He himself is acquainted with both ; but as he is unable properly to order his life, what might have been a constituent pleasure in paradise is only a torment in hell:

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Et, comme le soleil dans son enfer polaire,
Mon coeur ne sera plus qu'un bloc rouge et glacé.

The word *fortitude*, which has been used so often, again suggests itself to describe the clarity of this view of his own experience.

Another comparison with an English poet may serve to define this fortitude a little more closely. As has already been stated, Hopkins and Baudelaire have much of their spiritual experience in common ; it is deep and wide in both. But there is a point at which it diverges. After a day of struggle, Hopkins finds it possible to rest:

. . . Here! creep,
Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

It is as though a supernatural power restored to him, at least for the moment, the innocence and confidence of childhood: no harm will come from any source, and he may sleep. But to Baudelaire, who waits as anxiously for it, nightfall brings not the opportunity for sleep but only the duty of watching. He receives no supernatural aid, and must himself prepare for the struggle of the morrow. He does so by shrinking into the life of the senses ; and conceived as parts of the external world, even his spiritual failures can bring comfort:

. . . Vois se pencher les défuntes Années
Sur les balcons du ciel, en robes surannées ;
Surgir du fond des eaux le Regret souriante ;
Le Soleil, moribund s'endormir sous une arche,
Et, comme un long linceul se traînant à l'Orient,
Entends, ma chère, entends la douce Nuit qui marche.

According to Christianity, there is a sense in which the child is spiritually richer than the man, who needs to abase himself before he can rise to his full dignity. This must be taken account of, in estimating the amount of Christianity in Baudelaire (no doubt he has now separated from Butler) ; but to many readers the opening lines of the sonnet just quoted will seem wholly satisfying, both in what they admit and what they deny of human weakness:

Sois sage, o ma Douleur, et tiens-toi plus tranquille.
Tu réclamais le Soir ; il descend ; le voici.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To judge with confidence between Hopkins and Baudelaire would however require a depth of spiritual experience approximating to that of either ; and perhaps this is an occasion when, if ever, one should be content to talk of technical perfection.

JAMES SMITH.

# THE COMPOSER AND CIVILIZATION (II)

## ALBERT ROUSSEL AND LA MUSIQUE FRANÇAISE

' Le génie musicale de la France, c'est quelque chose comme la fantaisie dans la sensibilité.'—Claude Debussy.

' . . . le culte des valeurs spirituelles est à la base de toute société qui se prétend civilisée et la musique, parmi les arts, en est l'expression la plus sensible et la plus élevée.'—
Albert Roussel.

### I.

ONE wouldn't say that Roussel is ever likely to be a popular composer, but his career is, among contemporary musicians, almost unique in that he has been treated, even when misunderstood, with the respect that ought, in any civilized society, to accrue to the serious artist. He came to music late ; he proved himself consummate master of the materials of his craft ; almost alone among contemporary composers he was unmistakably recognized as a personality whom it was impossible not to respect. Young musicians have looked to him as a contemporary, but a contemporary whose experience and wisdom their inexperience might envy and admire ; older musicians admitted that they could not understand him but knew they had no right to smile. They didn't smile ; and even the most recalcitrant were in the long run converted. His reputation was, and is, international, unlike Fauré's, for the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

latter was accepted only in his own country. He dedicated himself to his art as religiously as did Fauré, but he makes contact with the life of to-day at more points and in more ways, for Fauré's conception of civilization belongs, as I have shown, in a sense to the past. It may be that this explains why discerning musicians of all countries have respected Roussel as the French respected Fauré—even the pugnacious Mr. Sorabji, who can hardly be suspected of a temperamental partiality for French music, saluted the later symphonies as music with heart and guts—at last a juicy steak amid the perpetual bubble and squeak of present day music-making. We respect Roussel's integrity, his eager love of his art ; and we feel that he too has had to grapple with the problems that confront us. We are on more comfortable ground with Roussel than in tackling Fauré who remained so majestically aloof from many of the values we are forced to live by. Though perhaps Roussel might be called a more difficult composer in the sense that he is more sophisticated.

Here, anyway, is something to start from. I suggested in the postscript to my Fauré essay that Roussel's music was the sort of music that a man with a sensibility similar to that of Fauré might write if he were confronted with the problems of the modern world. One could make the point more neatly by suggesting that whereas Fauré is civilized, Roussel is urbane. I don't use the word pejoratively for his urbanity represents always a serious and sometimes even a solemn attitude to life ; but I do want it to suggest Roussel's greater self-consciousness, his peculiar modernity. We recognize Fauré as being aristocratic, ' polished ' ; but his polish is inseparable from, indeed is, his civilization. We recognize Roussel as polished also, but by calling him urbane we imply that the relation between his civilization, his sophistication and his way of ordering his experience is complex and precarious as Fauré's conception of civilization had no need to be. He is the more self-conscious, the more allusive in his cultivation. I don't want to suggest that either attitude is superior to the other. But I do think that to insist on this distinction between Roussel's *urbanity* and Fauré's *civilization* is a key to any intelligent approach to Roussel's music. If the distinction seems at the moment rather hazy, my apology must be that to illustrate and elucidate it is what I am trying to do in this essay.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

## II.

As far as concerns the earliest works the distinction is pretty obviously and simply pertinent. The point is often made that they are written in an idiom which is a compromise between d'Indy and Debussy—on the one hand 'formal,' on the other impressionistic—though the somewhat unpleasant Parsifalish ascetic aspects of d'Indy's music can hardly have been congenial to Roussel. They are anyway, though intensely French, rather naïvely sophisticate in their subtle inflexion of line, almost a superior sort of dilettante music, the same *type* of music as Ravel was writing at the time, though probably tougher if less accomplished, and certainly of greater potentiality. The first piano pieces, the *Rustiques* (1904)—I pass over the initial amateurish exercise, *Des Heures Passent* (1898)—the first symphony, *Poème de la Forêt* (1905), the first *Trio* (1902) and the first Violin *Sonata* (1907), all these are overlong and meandering but none is without distinction. The reconciliation of impressionism with 'classical' formalism is the achievement of a personality of real force and originality, not merely a facile if intelligent tampering with other composers' mannerisms. To describe the technique of d'Indy and of impressionism is unnecessary; it is familiar enough, can be easily investigated at first hand, and anyway has little bearing on the work of Roussel's maturity. What I want to do here is to indicate briefly characteristics in these earliest compositions which are Roussel's own, which make his use of the d'Indy-Debussy technique inimitable. They are all traits which will be developed in the Rousselian technique of maturity, a technique which cannot be properly understood unless it is realized that the germ of it is present in the very earliest compositions.

Firstly, both the melodic and rhythmic structure of these works bears some relation to the traditional French *chanson*; the tunes have a racy vigour that reminds us that Roussel knew and admired the *beau musicien de la campagne* Déodat de Séverac, but at the same time he is never, like de Séverac, simply a regional composer. It is not merely that he uses, basically, the impressionistic, arty, technique; so did de Séverac. But his attitude to his rusticity is not simple but extremely sophisticated; if his melodies have qualities resembling those of the *chanson*, they wear them with an air of deliberate decorativeness and whimsicality. Roussel some-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

times assumes an air of wide-eyed bumpkin innocence ; but he does not let us forget that he is at heart the sophisticated man of cultivation—I almost said ' man of the world '—who writes those impressionistic harmonies, and the peculiar charm of his early music comes largely from this juxtaposition, in melodic and harmonic structure, of two apparently opposed points of view.

Roussel's rusticity is, then, in these early works, partly artificial. One might bring out the nature of this artificiality by suggesting that if his tunes are reminiscent of those of the *chanson*, it is the *chanson* in an eighteenth century setting that he is most interested in. Even at this date, though he takes over in some measure the prevailing technique of Debussy, the seeds of the revolt against impressionism are sown. Like de Séverac's, his early music is, of course, in a sense music of the open air and of the sun—the *Poème de la Forêt* is even directly evocative and illustrative. But he is much more equivocal than de Séverac in trying to create a musical corollary for the ecstasies of sea and sunlight ; nor is he ever, like Debussy, interested in sensation for its own sake. The *Poème de la Forêt* may be a very successful piece of nature music ; but what we are most conscious of is not its evocative brilliance but its geniality of melody, the precision and ingenuity of its rhythmic structure, its exquisite placing of sonorities and timbres. The *Divertissement* for piano and wind instruments (1906) reveals explicitly what we had always, indeed, suspected ; that it is not so much the natural aspects of Nature that appeal to Roussel as the eighteenth century elements of *champêtre* and *fête galante*. The *Divertissement* is a musical evocation of the eighteenth century *parc* of rivers, woods and lawns, a world of the *fantasque à la Watteau*, such as Debussy was more bitterly to turn to in his last years. The tunes are slender, but have an unimpeded dulcet lyricism, a delicious pastoral suavity, an autumnal gentleness and melancholy gentility ; the rhythms are elaborate, yet tactfully controlled. With its rhythmic ingenuity, the neat solidity of its lines, the unexpected juxtaposition of its harmonies, the *Divertissement* was in its way as important an event in musical history as Stravinsky's *Sacre*. Roussel had, in 1906, done with real melodic distinction what Poulenc was to do fifteen or twenty years later without much distinction of any kind except such as he borrowed second-hand from the tunes of the nursery

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and from Rossini. We shall see later how this elegant artificiality becomes not altogether distinct from the tradition of the *Commedia dell' Arte*.

In describing these early works we have concentrated mainly on their relation to French music of the past as revealed in their melodic and rhythmic structure. But there is one harmonic peculiarity which immediately distinguishes his work from that of any other composer of the time using the same more or less Debussyan idiom, and that is his use of the tritone. The central position given by Roussel to the tritone in his harmonic scheme is so characteristic that it might almost be called a mannerism. It is noticeable in his very earliest compositions and helps to give that oddly acrid quality to their bucolic sophistication. The device may be part of his legacy from d'Indy who got it, of course, from Wagner ; but there is no resemblance whatever between d'Indy's use of the tritone and Roussel's ; in d'Indy it has a rather emasculating effect while it is one of the conditions of Roussel's caustic vigour.

All these qualities are developed and synthesized in the first compositions of Roussel's maturity, the piano *Suite* opus 14 (1911), the piano *Sonatina* opus 16 (1912), the ballet *Le Festin de l'Araignée* opus 17 (1912), and a few songs. These works may be called mature in the sense that in them the rather jejune *ambivalence* between the bucolic and the sophisticated is first resolved into what for want of a better word we must call an ' attitude '—a way of experiencing which is *at once* toughly earthy and hyper-fastidious and cultivated. In technical terms one can make the same point by saying that the idiom no longer depends on artfully *juxtaposing* the idiosyncracies of impressionism with those of, say, the *chanson* and the eighteenth century, but evolves ' from within,' is a dialect peculiar to Roussel and to no one else. The *Suite* is composed of traditional French dance forms treated with the sardonic brilliance characteristic of Roussel. Except in the tender, elegant, and Watteau-like *Sicilienne* the music is brusque and racy, of a bucolic toughness but with a superb alacrity and distinction in the contour of the lines. The *Sonatina* manifests a trenchancy almost Haydnesque, with a brittle Scherzo such as we shall become familiar with in the later works, an adagio with a robust if dolorous melody in a swaying irregular measure, and a finale (telescoped

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with the adagio) in complex rhythmic formation—a movement as sunlit as de Séverac, but much more sinewy and ironic. *Le Festin*, the best known, I suppose, of all Roussel's works, is pastoral music in essence, music of the most witty and genial lyricism of spirit ; and it gains its peculiar flavour from what might almost be called a harmonic system developed from syncopated fourths and tritones. The rhythms of these works, supple and undulating, for the most part based on traditional French dance forms yet so briskly unexpected, testify to a sense of *physical movement* that no modern composer can rival. Some of the songs employ modern dance forms with the same éclat ; *Amoureux Séparés* written, surprisingly, in 1906, is a tango of delicate but full-blooded suavity.

## III.

*' Roussel, marin favorisé,*
*Entrelaçant l'ancre à la lyre,*
*Les moussons et les alisés*
*Servent le gré de ton navire . . . '*

Before he decided on a musical career at the age of twenty-five Roussel, it is well known, had been destined for the sea. His love of the sea and of travel never left him, and in 1909 he went a long voyage to India and the Orient. This expedition proved a turning point in his musical life. On his travels he heard oriental music and watched oriental dances. When he returned to France he spent a year or so maturing his impressions, then he produced his first two major compositions, the *Evocations* opus 15 (1910-1911) and *Padmavati* (1914).[1]

*Evocations* is an odd work, a *tour de force*. It is quite deliberately an evocation of the Orient in a western technique, and hindoo and pentatonic scales are woven into a gorgeous orchestral fabric. There is, of course, no attempt to create ' atmosphere ' ; it is Roussel's sympathetic comment, in his own language, on the peoples and countries of the East—and we must remember that even in his very earliest work Roussel had given evidence of a

[1]Chronologically the piano *Sonatina* and the *Festin* were written *after* the *Evocations*. I regard them, however, as the consummation of the early manner not as the beginning of something new.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

certain exoticism of imagination. Here is music of a strange voluptuous fascination, a rich and sumptuous power. Mr. Sorabji, who should know, places it among the few really convincing evocations of the Orient in western music.

In *Padmavati* the process is carried a step further. Here there is no attempt to ' evoke ' the Orient. Eastern scales and rhythms have been assimilated into the Roussel idiom, becoming as much French as oriental. Before *Padmavati* he had, of course, created his own idiom by means of the tritonal elaboration of his harmony ; but it was an idiom too restricted to express anything more than the limited states of feeling I have tried to describe. After *Padmavati* he never looked back, he was done with impressionism and with all contemporary experimentism. He had added a language to the history of music, a language of tragic austerity and ardent lyricism. *Padmavati* was frowned upon by critics because of its wilful gaucherie and harmonic incompetence. Actually its technique marks a newly won vitality, and Roussel himself realized this when he wrote, in April, 1916: ' Je réfléchissais à cela hier et je me demandais justement si je n'avais pas à craindre ce nouvel état d'esprit, qui résultera de la crise actuelle, pour *Padmavati* qui a été conçue et composée entièrement avant la guerre. Toute réflexion faite, je ne crois pas. Je ne vois dans mon œuvre aucune trace d'influences morbides ou déliquescentes. Il me semble au contraire que le ton general en est plutôt viril et fort . . . ' This seems to be the place to give some general account of this fresh technical mastery—of the typical late Roussel language in which all the works after *Padmavati* were with various modifications to be written. For a more comprehensive treatment of some of the points I am going to make very briefly the reader is referred to the chapters on technique in M. Hoérée's admirable little book on Roussel (*Les Editions Rieder*, 1938).

## IV.

The key to the technique of Roussel's late work is by way of what M. Hoérée calls its *polymodality*. Most types of defective scales are to be found in hindoo music, the most modally fecund, and the scales of hindoo music are almost all exploited in *Padmavati*. Greek modes are used in *La Naissance de la Lyre*,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the pentatonic scales of Chinese music in *A un jeune gentilhomme* and *passim*. But to catalogue the various modes employed by Roussel is futile, and, moreover, impossible, since like Fauré, Roussel evolved his idiom quite spontaneously and it is not true to say that modalism influenced the shape of his melodies but rather that the shape of his melodies—and behind that the mould of his sensibility—precisely determined their modality. He seldom writes melodies in one specific mode, but his melodic thinking tends towards modality in the way in which his tunes oscillate round a fixed point, generating other related figurations (the basses of *Padmavati* by this process vitalize the whole score despite their apparent immobility ; and *cf.*, the *Danse des Nymphes* from *La Naissance*, and the *Sarabande* from the *Suite in F*) ; in the undulating contour of the melodies, their abrupt leaps (particularly of sixths and sevenths), their irregular accentuation, their sinewy chromaticism, and above all in their perpetual modulations and tonal instability.

Roussel's conception of his art is essentially melodic, rather than thematic. He works on a principle of melodic evolution by modal alteration, independent of the customary procedures of repetition, transposition and development. This trick of incessant transition from one mode to another by means of *modes alterés* is a distinctive feature of his principle of modulation and hence of his harmony. (The major scale with the flattened sixth is used in, for instance, the *Second Violin Sonata*, and the minor scale with the augmented fourth *passim* ; that is, the tritone, in the later work, has become as much a melodic as a harmonic idiosyncrasy). All this means, of course, that Roussel's phrases tend to be of exceptional length and sustained power. In this respect his technique resembles Fauré's in a more ' advanced ' form. Though his melodies are tonally much freer than Fauré's they too are never *a*tonal since even his most complex departures from diatonicism can be referred back to some scale system or chordal structure. M. Hoérée quotes an interesting case (a passage from the *Sarabande* of the *Suite in F*) proving that the composer himself is not always—or indeed usually —' intellectually ' aware of any such system. It seems natural and inevitable that a composer so concerned with the civilized virtues should not defy the physical laws of the art of sound.

But not only does each melodic line, while being firmly based

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on a sense of tonality, glide rapidly through a multiplicity of modal and defective scales, but the various melodic strands that make up the complete score may pass *simultaneously* through different modes. ' Rien ne s'oppose au contrepoint polytonal, à la superposition des lignes melodiques se développant dans deux ou trois tons différents.' Here Roussel is not referring to polytonality of the somewhat artificial kind practised by Milhaud but to this *polymodie simultanée* I have been describing ; and it becomes quite obvious that his polymodal melodic thinking must condition his scheme of harmony. (M. Hoérée mentions the corollary in the case of Honneger, whose counterpoint is the result of the adoption of ' modern harmony ' ; but he doesn't point out what a give-away this is, how much it explains about Honnegar's inflated reputation).

It is possible to find instances in Roussel's work in which the harmony is conditioned by one particular mode ; the harmony of the *Ode Chinois*, for instance, is completely controlled by the pentatonic scale. And sometimes the equivocal Rousselian harmonic flavour is to be attributed to his use of interior pedals—a device which, again, is found in oriental music and double appogiaturas. Most often, however, the harmonic tang is the outcome of his polymodal contrapuntal writing ; defective scales produce modifications in the tetrachord, and a singular shift to the most obvious harmony. The predominance of certain intervals—the tritone, the major seventh and minor ninth—the frequent use of the chord of the eleventh with the major seventh between the ninth and the fundamental, and of the thirteenth with the minor ninth between the third and the eleventh—these are harmonic traits which owe their existence to modes of melodic expression which had been implicit in Roussel's music ever since, and in a subterranean sort of way even before, the creation of *Padmavati*. His melodic sense does not call for exact symmetry ; and there is no place in his music for ' academically ' developing harmonies. He was accused of writing false—harmonically unsound—basses precisely because his basses were so integral to his unique melodic idiom. The convention of the Bass was a convention deduced from the music of the eighteenth century, to which it was perfectly adequate. In a more subtle and fluid way it is applicable to such a comparatively homophonic music as that of Fauré. But there was absolutely no musical reason why, in the nineteenth century,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it should have been academically elevated into a universal unalterable Law. There are, as several distinguished musicians of to-day have pointed out, many types of polyphonic music to which such a harmonic conception in chordal ' blocks ' simply isn't pertinent. It isn't relevant to Roussel's mature music ; his basses have an importance equal with, but by no means greater than, his ' middle ' parts, whether it be in such diverse manifestations of his genius as the austere chromaticism of the *Marche Funèbre* from *Padmavati*, the comparative diatonicism of the chorales and fugues of the *Psaume*, or the supple canonic writing of the piano *Concerto*.

Rhythmically the Roussel language is rich and complex, inevitably so since his melody and polyphony are rich and complex. But he preserves, as we shall see, his respect for the traditional dance forms of France and of eighteenth-century Europe. His rhythmic vitality and sanity perhaps comes from this delicate compromise between freedom and discipline. Roussel's æsthetic, in so far as he can be said to have had one, was very simple:

> ' Ce que je voudrais réaliser, c'est une musique se satisfaisant à elle-même, une musique qui cherche a s'affranchir de tout élément pittoresque et descriptif et à jamais éloignée de toute localisation dans l'espace . . . Loin de vouloir décrire je m'efforce toujours d'écarter de mon esprit le souvenir des objets et des formes susceptibles de se traduire en effets musicaux. Je ne veux faire que la musique.'

There are to be no more ' evocations.'

## V.

*Padmavati* is one of the major achievements of the twentieth century ; but it is in Roussel's development a transitional work. Without knowledge of it it is difficult to understand the works in the late manner and perhaps the reason why *Pour un Fête de Printemps* and the *Second Symphony* appeared at first so baffling was that they were actually performed before *Padmavati*, presentation of which was delayed, owing to the war and consequent enonomic difficulties, until 1925. After *Padmavati* Roussel never again touched, except indirectly, on exotic subjects ; but he had learned from oriental music the direction which his melodic thinking

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was to take, he had escaped the tyranny of conventional idioms. The language he evolved for *Pour un Fête* and for the *Second Symphony*—the language I have tried to describe in the preceding section—remained his musical speech for the rest of his career. He modified and simplified it ; but it remained substantially the same.

One might make the point more concretely by suggesting that hearing the modal melodies, the subtle inflexions and complex rhythmic organization of oriental music awoke Roussel to a realization of the true nature of his own heritage. The relation of his earliest music to the *chanson* tends to be, as I have shown, decorative and whimsical ; the first mature pieces incarnate a serious attitude, but are still somewhat topically sophisticate in their urbanity and locally regional in their rurality. In the late works he has realized, whether consciously or no, that he, born at Tourcoing, in French Flanders, belongs to the tradition that produced the great religious and troubadour composers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the tradition of Pérotin, Machault, Binchois, Dufay and Jannequin.[1] Of course his music only superficially ' resembles ' theirs ; he has not their European culture. But this is what his new-found rhythmic and melodic independence—his sanity, his suppleness, the mature humour or melancholy of his linear inflexions—really means ; he has divested the idiosyncracies of his earlier work of their merely topical and local elements, he has taken his place in the evolving tradition of *la musique française*. Certainly I know of no other contemporary music which has precisely this poise and ripeness of attitude. The late works of Vaughan Williams have something of the same toughness and perhaps Vaughan Williams's relation to the tradition of English

[1]Convinced of its importance, I was yet doubtful as to how far this point could be pressed until I found that M. Hoérée bears me out. He makes the point only in passing and doesn't bring out its full implications, but he does, as one of Roussel's most intimate friends, suggest that the composer himself was aware of, and recognized some such relationship. M. Hoérée interestingly compares Machault's ' balancement mélodique ' with the insistently oscillating line of such a thing of Roussel as *Ciel, aer et vens* for soprano and flute.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

music is similar to that of Roussel to Machault and Jannequin ; but the tradition of Vaughan Williams is hardly one that can be called urbane ; he, in his late works, for all his toughness of emotional fibre, is more hysterical in his modernity.[1]

There is one more aspect of this relation, in the last works, to the traditional *chanson* to be noticed. On the one hand the relation to the *chanson* provides a link between Roussel and fifteenth-century French music and the work of the Flemish polyphonists ; on the other hand it connects him, by way of the nursery song, with the tunes of the café-concert and hence with certain aspects of the art of Erik Satie. The subtle poise of his best work is to be attributed to the equilibrium he achieves between these various ways of feeling ; the latin culture he inherits from France (partly a mature Machault-like tenderness of lyricism, partly sympathy with the French eighteenth century classical forms) ; the robust gravity and impudent drolerie he inherits from Flanders (*cf.* the enormous soaring melodies of his adagios, and some of the tunes of the scherzos) ; and the equivocal naiveté and sophisticated brutality he shares with the French nursery song and the tune of the café-concert respectively (*cf.* the relation of the scherzos to Chabrier, Bizet and Satie). The rhythmic poise which I have noticed earlier as being produced by a combination of melodic freedom with the traditional discipline of the movements of the dance is, of course, a more particular example of the same maturity of attitude. We can understand what Roussel meant when he said that he hated ' tout sentiment résultant d'une hypertrophie du *moi.*' We shall be examining further these various traits in considering with some particularity the works in the final, the ' classical ' manner.

---

[1]If we admit that there is some similarity between the positions occupied in English and French musical life by Vaughan Williams and Roussel respectively, we can also see that Roussel enjoyed the advantage in being French. I don't think it is an accident that Vaughan Williams, before he arrived at his late manner, should have written such a depressing amount of music that is utterly bad. Roussel in his early days wrote some music that is crude and amateurish and therefore dull, but nothing that is bad in the sense of being emotionally muzzy or cheap or vulgar.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

## VI.

Roussel was aware, himself, that *Pour un Fête* and the second *Symphony* (opus 22 and 23 respectively, composed 1919-1921), marked a fresh stage in his musical career. ' Je travaillerai (he writes), avec plus d'ardeur et de frénésie que jamais. Jamais je ne suis senti aussi dispos et aussi frais d'esprit et aussi dégagé de toute influence, et cela provient evidemment du grand répos de mon cerveau . . . ' The new polymodal technique, the harmonic system of appogiaturas is in these works consummated ; the task of simplification—of concentration—remains. In 1925 Roussel retired to Vasterival, small fishing village so congenial to his temperament, and in one year produced *La Naissance de la Lyre* opus 24, the *Sérénade* for flute, violin, viola, cello and harp, opus 30, the second *Violin Sonata* opus 28, the *Suite in F* opus 33 and a number of songs. These works inaugurate the ' new classicism ' of the final manner.

The manner is called ' classical ' because, I suppose, it represents a return to *le style continu* (compared with the fragmentary methods of the impressionists). In *La Naissance de la Lyre* and the *Sérénade* the lyricism is more supple, the harmony more acid, the orchestration delicate and fluid. The *Suite* is written in three eighteenth-century dance forms ; a Prelude with a fierce, jaunty rhythmic pulse and an immense bounding second subject characterized by abrupt leaps and racy twists ; a Sarabande with a long flowing line of a sweet yet powerful elegance and sumptuousness of stature ;[1] and a Gigue in which a comic truculent nursery tune is introduced on the trumpet, the entry being timed with the most consummate skill so that the balance between the ludicrously vulgar (the café-chantant element) and the vigorously earthy (the

[1] I use the word stature in an attempt to indicate the curiously static quality of the Sarabande and some other of Roussel's late slow movements—a sense of motion within immobility. The rhythmic feeling is very subtle and strong but it seems, as it were, disembodied. It is rather like an aural form of the visual phenomenon of watching a cinematograph representation of a slow and courtly dance (which the Sarabande is) ; one applauds and appraises the elegance of the pose, the charm of the movement, while remaining personally aloof.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

folk-tune element) is perfectly poised. It is movements like this that remind one of Satie, not only in their chanson-like lilt and persistent repetition of rhythmic formulæ, but also in that curious urbane distinction and precariousness in the melodic contour[1]—a subtle, almost cynical detachment (note the slightly caustic insouciance given to the nursery tune by flattening the leading note)—and that singular piquancy of orchestration. Roussel must, indeed, be counted among the few really significant orchestrators of the twentieth century. His instrumentation is unatmospheric, taut, but with a tortuous spiced quality, a knack of juxtaposing sharply defined sonorities for the sake of polyphonic clarity, which helps to give his music its stringent, almost wry flavour.

'J'ai toujours poursuivi le dessin de la construction et du rhythme ; le récherche de la forme et du développement ont été ma constante préoccupation.' This sentence of Roussel emphasizes his concern for discipline in these compositions of his final years. The setting of Psalm LXXX uses only the simplest technical means, so simple as to appear on paper almost gauche ; yet it attains in its detached way—for Roussel's urbanity hardly presupposes any accepted religious creed—to a farouche majesty and grandeur. The *Concert* for small orchestra, opus 34 (1927) and the *Petite Suite*—Aubade, Pastorale, and Mascarade—opus 39 (1929) have an elegant lucidity and sprightly concision that make them the music par excellence of the commedia dell' Arte ; and the piano *Concerto* opus 36 (1927), with its percussive rhythms and bouncing themes in the first movement, its comic frustrated café-chantant tune in the finale—we may compare some of the tunes of Wiéner, though Roussel's tunes are much less 'juicy,' more aristocratically poised—attains in the adagio to a truly noble chastity of line and distinction of pianistic ornament.

The peak point of the Rousselian idiom is perhaps reached in the third and fourth Symphonies (1930 and 1934). All the

[1]I know Satie's melodies are short and symmetrical whereas Roussel's are longish and complex ; that's the inevitable reflection of the simple singlemindedness of Satie's sensibility and the comparative tortuosity of Roussel's. But the fact that Satie is so miraculously singleminded also means that he is a much smaller and more limited composer than Roussel.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

elements we have noticed combine here with deeper substance and richness. The first movement of the *Third Symphony* has the familiar prancing modally inflected themes, the ferocious pulsing rhythmic organization—the sense of physical movement. The grave and ripe adagio reaches a climax in a clattering fugue and then subsides serenely in a sustained soaring aria for violin. The Scherzo is a racy waltz, more acrid version of Chabrier ; the finale combines a chanson-like lyricism with passages of tranquil melodic solemnity. The *Fourth Symphony* explores similar reaches of experience with almost equal power.

It is not necessary to describe the long list of compositions written (mostly at Vasterival) during the nineteen-thirties. They manifest—through the *Sinfonietta*, the *String Trio*, the *Quartet* and the ballets, down to the last unfinished Trio for wind instruments—no falling off from mastery and an ever increasingly stringent economy. Perhaps the best introduction to Roussel's late work is by way of the songs of these final years. *Cœur en Péril*, elliptical but comparatively diatonic in line, offers a characteristically wry transformation of the clichés of Spanish music, just as the odd *Jazz dans la Nuit* opus 38 had metamorphosed the rhythms of jazz into something as unlike jazz as it is like Roussel. *L'Heure du Retour* is a mournful and bitterly *fauve* perversion of the nostalgic song of the café-concert ; and the two songs that comprise opus 55, *Vieilles Cartes* and *Si quelquefois tu pleures* are perfect examples of the Rousselian whimsical yet melancholy urbanity in their ' modally ' evolving yet symmetrically poised polyphonic contour, and their consequent piquancy of harmony. In the *Deux Poèmes Chinois* opus 47, the apparent inconsequentiality of the various linear strands—their apparent disjointedness and independence of one another—produces an effect at once amused and nonchalant, yet hardly cynical. The inconsequentiality is the result of a peculiarly French aloofness of attitude ; it creates no feeling of vapidity but rather of calculated understatement.

The masterpiece of all these late songs is undoubtedly, however, *Le Kérioklepte* from opus 44, in which the droll tune is so delicately moulded that the most apparently simple triad or the most undemonstrative rhythm takes on, beneath it, an inexhaustibly surprising irony. It would never have been written, obviously, but for such things of Satie as the *Ludions*—it is a case here of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the pupil teaching the master ; but Satie achieved nothing as profoundly human in its urbanity.

The *Rapsodie Flamande* opus 56 (1936) might be mentioned in conclusion because it is the only occasion on which Roussel directly employs Flemish folk tunes. It is light music of delicious buoyancy, orchestrated with that crisp pungency I have already referred to. There is a berceuse transparently harmonized for strings ; the other tunes are treated with unashamedly rowdy jocularity. Again the orchestration, particularly in its use of the brass, is reminiscent of Satie. This brilliantly urbane little work should be a lesson to all sentimentally rustic folkmongering musicians.

## VII.

Something remains to be said about Roussel's conception of the place of music in opera and ballet. An account of the history of opera might be given in terms of its tendency to aspire now to the dramatic and realistic, now to the balletistic ideal, and Roussel follows Satie and most twentieth century musicians in coming out, roughly speaking, on the side of the ballet. His principles were indicated in a programme note to *Padmavati*, with which work he said he was trying to revive the form of *opéra-ballet* in the manner of Rameau :

> ' L'opéra-ballet se distingue de l'opéra ordinaire en ce que la danse y tient autant de place que le chant et qu'au lieu de n'intervenir que comme un divertissement elle doit se rattacher constamment à l'action.'

Since ' tout est conventionel au theâtre ' realism is a false ideal ; the essential relation is that between music and physical movement.

It will readily be perceived that Roussel, with his superb musical sense of physical movement, especially as reflected in the traditional French dance forms, combined at the same time with his sustained melodic power and linear freedom, was peculiarly endowed for the creation of works in this form, and the ballets he wrote at Vasterival, *Bacchus et Ariane* (1930) and *Aenéas* (1934)—*ballet avec choeurs*—are certainly among his most

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

impressive accomplishments. He possibly learned something from Satie, learned how to combine the maximum of personality with the ' objective ' organization of rhythmic sequences ; but the idiom is his own, substantially that of the *Concertino for Cello* opus 57 (1936), the late songs and the other works of the period ; and it is a logical extension of principles implicit in all his mature music. Readers wishing to examine his method cannot do better than to read over the extremely beautiful *Danse de Didon* and the majestic and rhythmically exciting *Hymne Final* from *Aenéas*.

The year before he died Roussel unexpectedly produced an opéra bouffe, *Le Testament de la Tante Caroline* (1936). I have been unable to obtain a score of this work, which seems to be unpublished. It must surely be a creation of remarkable interest—the *Rapsodie Flamande*, composed about the same time, is suggestive of the kind of fluent ironic gaiety we might expect from it, though it would probably be too allusive to be really popular. It was, I believe, a financial success in France ; there is no reason to hope that it will ever be produced in this country.

## VIII.

> ' Un artiste dérive toujours de quelqu'un, d'un maître antérieur dont il s'est inspiré, consciemment ou inconsciemment . . . On se juge très mal soi-même et je n'arrive pas à retrouver mon père musical . . . à qui me rattachez-vous?'
>
> Albert Roussel.

Roussel's distinction, I hope I have made it clear, lies in his creation of a personal language ; and he has created that language because he has been aware of his place in the traditional evolution of French music ; so that an attempt to estimate his position has amounted, really, to an attempt to answer the question he asks in the quotation at the head of this section. But when I say that he is ' aware ' of his position I do not mean that he has thought about it as I have tried to do in these pages ; only that he has, through a long process of evolution, assimilated what he wanted from French music of the past and taken his place in the succession of great figures that make up that tradition. He does not recreate in music, like Machault, a European civilization ; nor, like

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Couperin, a great but comparatively local French civilization ; he does not express an ideally formulated civilization like Fauré. But his response to the world is that of a man who has understood and sympathized with all that Machault and Couperin and Fauré have stood for. True, though his music is powerful, it has not the effortless power of Fauré's finest work ; and his achievement is less important and less remarkable than that of the completely cosmopolitan van Dieren. Yet his urbanity must, I think, for its traditional originality, be recognized as a sort of wisdom ; and I suppose, anyway, that France is about the only country that still offers the material—the cultural heritage—necessary for such an undertaking.

I think it is significant that though his language was universally recognized as an accomplishment utterly independent of and comparable in importance with, the various revolutions of the most influential of modern composers—Stravinsky, Schönberg and Hindemith—this language has had absolutely no influence on practising musicians—and this despite the fact that young composers looked to him, as a commanding personality, for guidance. (Satie took a course of strict counterpoint under Roussel but if there is any question of influence involved here it is, as I have suggested, the pupil who influenced the master. And it is not as surprising as it superficially appears that the Parisian-American, completely anti-traditional revolutionary Edgar Varèse, should have been among Roussel's pupils). In his way, Roussel was as lonely a figure in his generation as Sibelius. He didn't seem to mind being lonely :

> ' Il n'est pas nécessaire qu'une symphonie ou un drame deviennent aussi populaires qu'une chanson de Mayol. La Musique est l'art le plus fermé et le plus inaccessible. C'est du musicien bien plus encore que du poète qu'on peut dire qu'il est complètement isolé dans le monde, seul avec son langage plus ou moins incompréhensible . . . A part deux ou trois belles œuvres qu'on pourrait écrire pour le peuple, pour des fêtes analogues aux fêtes suisses et qui seraient comme de grandes fresques largement brossées, tout le reste, dans l'état réciproque actuel de la musique et de la foule, sera toujours destiné à de très rares auditeurs.'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I suppose this is sensible enough ; only it's a bit hard on the composer who has not his genius, and his self-sufficiency. There must be few who can have the right to feel so confident.

W. H. MELLERS.

## NOTE.

The following are the extant recordings of music by Roussel:

*Third Symphony* opus 42, orchestra Lamoureux, con. Albert Wolff, Polydor CA 8199-8201.

*Suite in F* opus 33, con. Coppola, Gramophone W 1132-3.

*Danse des Nymphes*, con. Coppola, Gramophone W 1133. From *La Naissance de la Lyre*.

*Le Festin de l'Araignée*, orchestra Straram, Columbia LFX 47-8.

*Sicilienne* from piano Suite opus 14, Lazare Levy, Gramophone L 909.

The following songs recorded by Claire Croiza for Columbia:

*Invocation, Light, Amoureux Séparés, Le Bachelier de Salamanque, A Un Jeune Gentilhomme, Sarabande, Jazz dans la Nuit.*

The following have been withdrawn from circulation but may sometimes be obtained second-hand:

*Sinfonietta* opus 52, orchestra Jane Evrard, Gramophone.

*Ciel, aer et vens* (soprano and flute), A. Noordewier Reddingius, Col. hollandais DHX 36.

More detailed Rousseliana can be found in M. Hoérée's book.

The most important of these is, of course, the recording of the *Symphony*. The performance is fine and authoritative, the recording is good, though a little shrill. The recording of the *Suite* is not as lucid as it might be in the more polyphonic passages, but quite adequate on the whole. The songs are sung with insight and delicacy by Claire Croiza, but unfortunately each one is backed by a ' manufactured ' song of unbelievable insipidity by Milhaud or Honneger.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# E. M. FORSTER[1]

THE problem with which E. M. Forster immediately confronts criticism is that of the oddly limited and uncertain quality of his distinction—his real and very fine distinction. It is a problem that Miss Macaulay doesn't raise. In fact, she doesn't offer a critique ; her book is rather a guide, simply and chattily descriptive, to the not very large corpus of Mr. Forster's work. Nor does she provide the biographical information that, however impertinently in one sense of the adverb, we should like to have and that we might have been led by the publisher's imprint to hope for, however faintly. We should like to have it because it would, there is good reason for supposing, be very pertinent to the problem facing the critic. Still we do, after all, without extra-critical pryings or impartings, know quite a lot about the particular milieu and the phase of English culture with which Mr. Forster's work is associated ; enough, perhaps, to discuss with some profit the extent to which, highly individual as it is, it is also, in its virtues and its limitations, representative.

The inequality in the early novels—the contrast between maturity and immaturity, the fine and the crude—is extreme ; so extreme that a simple formula proposes itself. In his comedy, one might carelessly say, he shows himself the born novelist ; but he aims also at making a poetic communication about life, and here he is, by contrast, almost unbelievably crude and weak. Yet, though his strength in these novels, it is true, comes out in an art that suggests comparisons with Jane Austen, while it is in the element, the intention, relating them most obviously to *The Celestial*

---

[1] *The Writings of E. M. Forster*, by Rose Macaulay (Hogarth Press, 7/6).

[I have to call attention to the essay on E. M. Forster by Mr. D. A. Traversi that appeared in *Arena* for April, 1937. If I had re-read it before writing my own note instead of after, I might perhaps have decided that Mr. Traversi, with his admirable economy, had made my observations superfluous. As it is, I offer my particular limited approach, with its attendant stresses, with the less misgiving because there is his essay to refer the reader to].

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*Omnibus* that he incurs disaster, the formula is too simple. For one thing, to lump the four pre-war novels together is clumsy ; a distinction has to be made. There is no disastrous weakness in the first of them, *Where Angels fear to tread*, or in *A Room with a View* (which, in order of publication, comes third). And the distinction here isn't one of ' comedy ' as against ' poetry ' or ' comedy-cum-poetry.' For though the art of the ' born novelist ' has, in these two novels, a characteristic spinsterly touch, that novelist is at the same time very perceptibly the author of *The Celestial Omnibus*, the tales in which suggest, in their poetic ambition—they may fairly be said to specialize in ' poetry '—no one less than they do Jane Austen. Italy, in those novels, represents the bent of interest that Pan and the other symbols represent in the tales, and it is a bent that plays an essential part in the novelist's peculiar distinction. Pre-eminently a novelist of civilized personal relations, he has at the same time a radical dissatisfaction with civilization—with the finest civilization of personal intercourse that he knows ; a radical dissatisfaction that prompts references to D. H. Lawrence rather than to Jane Austen.

In his treatment of personal relations the bent manifests itself in the manner and accent of his preoccupation with sincerity—a term that takes on, indeed, a different value from that which it would have if Jane Austen were our subject. His pre-occupation with emotional vitality, with the problem of living truly and freshly from a centre, leads him, at any rate in intention, outside the limits of consciousness that his comedy, in so far as we can separate it off, might seem to involve—the limits, roughly, that it is Jane Austen's distinction to have kept. The intention is most obvious in his way of bringing in, in association, love and sudden death ; as, for instance, in chapter IV of *A Room with a View* (see pp. 54-58). It is still more strikingly manifested in *Where Angels fear to tread*. There Italy figures much more substantially and disturbingly as the critical challenge to the ' civilization ' of Mr. Forster's cultivated English people, and what may be called for the moment the Lawrencian bent is more pronounced. There is the scene (c. VII) in which passionate paternal love, a kind of elemental hunger for continuance, is enacted in the devotion of the caddish and mercenary Italian husband to the baby ; and the baby it is that, in this book, suffers the violent

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

death. There follows the episode in which the Italian tortures Philip Herriton by wrenching his broken arm. Yet none of Mr. Forster's books is more notable for his characteristic comedy, with its cool, sedate and rather spinsterly poise. And there is, nevertheless, no discrepancy or clash of modes or tones: *Where Angels fear to tread* is decidedly a success. It seems to me the most successful of the pre-war novels.

*A Room with a View* is far from being a failure, but, though the themes here might seem to be much less dangerous, there are certain weaknesses to be noted. There is, as Miss Macaulay points out, a curious spinsterish inadequacy in the immediate presentation of love (in *Where Angels fear to tread*, significantly, serious love between the sexes doesn't come in, at any rate immediately). And old Mr. Emerson, though not a disaster, does lead one to question the substantiality of the wisdom that he seems intended to represent. Nevertheless *A Room with a View* is a charming and very original book—extremely original and personal, yet decidedly, and more unreservedly than *Where Angels fear to tread*, provoking comparisons with Jane Austen.

The reference above to D. H. Lawrence was, of course, an over-emphasis, but as a way of calling attention to Mr. Forster's peculiar distinction among Edwardian novelists it can perhaps be justified. If we have to agree that he shows the influence of Meredith (see for instance the story called *Other Kingdom* in *The Celestial Omnibus*), that is not to make the originality and the distinction less remarkable. The critic who deals so damagingly with Meredith in *Aspects of the Novel* is potentially there in the genuineness of the element in Mr. Forster's early novels that sets them apart by themselves in the period of Arnold Bennett, Wells, Galsworthy and (one might add) Conrad. For Mr. Forster's 'poetic' intention is genuine and radical, even if in expression it may manifest itself as a surprising immaturity; and actually, in *Where Angels fear to tread* and *A Room with a View* it for the most part commands a touch that is hardly to be distinguished from that of the comedy.

Or perhaps it would have been better to say 'is commanded by'; for when, coming to the other two pre-war novels, *The Longest Journey* and *Howards End*, we ask how it is that they should be so much less successful, we notice at once how the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

contrast brings out the sure easy poise, in *Where Angels fear to tread* and *A Room with a View*, of the artist's—the 'born novelist's' —control. The art of the comedy is a distancing art—

' " Foreigners are a filthy nation " said Harriet '

—and it is a tribute to the novelist's skill that we should have no disturbing sense of a change in mode and convention when we pass to effects quite other than those of comedy. That is, the whole action is framed and distanced. Lilia, Gino's silly tragic victim in *Where Angels fear to tread*, Philip Herriton, commissioned to retrieve the baby, Miss Abbott and the rest, are all simplified figures, seen from the outside ; it is only in a very qualified way that they engage us (though they engage us enough for a measure of poignancy). The complexity of the situation we see as such : though we are interested and sympathetic, we are hardly worried. The critical scenes and episodes towards the end are, of course, not undisturbing ; yet we are not immersed in them—the detachment, though modified, still holds. In this effect the Italian setting, exotic and quaint—its people seen as another kind from us, has its part ; it lends itself beautifully to the reconciliation of the ' comedy ' with the ' poetry ' and of tragic intensity with detachment.

The other two novels are much less the artist's : in them the imposing or seeking of any such conditions of a detached and happily poised art has been precluded by the author's essential interest. *The Longest Journey*, perhaps one may without impertinence observe, has plainly a good deal of the autobiographical about it, and it offers, in the presentment of its themes, a fulness and intimacy of realization. True, we find there too the characteristic comedy (notably in all that concerns Mr. Herbert Pembroke), but we can no longer say the success of this carries with it a general success. In fact, there are discrepancies, disharmonies and disturbing shifts that go a long way towards justifying the formula thrown out and withdrawn in the second paragraph of this note. The poised success of the comedy in its own mode serves to emphasize the immaturity, the unsureness and sometimes the crudity of the other elements, with which it wouldn't have been easily congruent even if they had in themselves justified the intention they represent.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Passionate love and, close upon it, sudden death, come early in this book:

> 'He had forgotten his sandwiches, and went back to get them. Gerald and Agnes were locked in each other's arms. He only looked for a moment, but the sight burnt into his brain. The man's grip was the stronger. He had drawn the woman on to his knee, was pressing her, with all his strength, against him. Already her hands slipped off him, and she whispered, "Don't—you—hurt—." Her face had no expression. It stared at the intruder and never saw him. Then her lover kissed it, and immediately it shone with mysterious beauty, like some star.' (p. 51).

Gerald is a brutal and caddish minor-Public-School Apollo and Agnes a suburban snob, but this glimpse is for Rickie, the hero, a revelation:

> 'He thought, "Do such things actually happen?" and he seemed to be looking down coloured valleys. Brighter they glowed, till gods of pure flame were born in them, and then he was looking at pinnacles of virgin snow. While Mr. Pembroke talked, the riot of fair images increased. They invaded his being and lit lamps at unsuspected shrines. Their orchestra commenced in that suburban house, where he had to stand aside for the maid to carry in the luncheon. Music flowed past him like a river. He stood at the springs of creation and heard the primæval monotony. Then an obscure instrument gave out a little phrase. The river continued unheeding. The phrase was repeated, and a listener might know it was a fragment of the Tune of tunes . . . In full unison was love born, flame of the flame, flushing the dark river beneath him and the virgin snows above. His wings were infinite, his youth eternal . . . '

Then, a dozen pages later (p. 62):

> 'Gerald died that afternoon. He was broken up in the football match. Rickie and Mr. Pembroke were on the ground when the accident took place.'

It is a key-experience for Rickie. Its significance is made explicit—perhaps rather too explicit. This memory of pure uncalculating

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

passion as a kind of ultimate, invested by death with an awful finality and something like a religious sanction, becomes for Rickie a criterion or touch for the real, a kind of test for radical sincerity, in his questing among the automatisms, acquiescences, blurs and blunted indifferences of everyday living:

> 'He has no knowledge of the world . . . He believes in women because he has loved his mother. And his friends are as young and ignorant as himself. They are full of the wine of life. But they have not tasted the cup—let us call it the teacup—of experience, which has made men of Mr. Pembroke's type what they are. Oh, that teacup!' (p. 74).

The theme of *The Longest Journey* is Rickie's struggle to live by the truth of the wine while being immersed in knowledge of the world.

Rickie writes stories like Mr. Forster's in *The Celestial Omnibus*. There is a note of ironic indulgence in the references to them: Rickie is very young. The direct and serious expression that the novelist offers us of the bent represented by such stories is in terms of a character, Stephen Wonham,

> 'a man dowered with coarse kindliness and rustic strength, a kind of cynical ploughboy.' (p. 217).

He is the illegitimate child (comes the shattering revelation) of Rickie's mother and a young farmer, of whom we are told

> 'people sometimes took him for a gentleman until they saw his hands.'

It is a Lady-Chatterley-and-the-keeper situation that is outlined, though Robert is too much idealized to be called a Lawrencian character. Stephen, product of a perfect passionate love (cut short by death), grows up among the villagers and shepherds a kind of heroic boor, devoid of the civilized graces and refinements, representative of physical and spiritual health:

> '. . . looked at the face, which was frank, proud and beautiful, if truth is beauty. Of mercy or tact such a face knew little. It might be coarse, but . . . ' (p. 243).

He loves horseplay and can be a drunken blackguard, but he is incapable of anything other than direct sincerity: he would, as

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ansell says, ' rather die than take money from people he did not love.' He moves roughshod through the latter part of the action, violating suburban flowerbeds, outraging gentilities, and breaking through the pretences, self-deceptions and timid meannesses of respectability.

> ' He only held the creed of " here am I and there are you," and therefore class-distinctions were trivial things to him ' (p. 292).

When Rickie, having suspected him of intent to blackmail, offers apology and atonement, this is how Stephen replies:

> ' " Last Sunday week," interrupted Stephen, his voice suddenly rising, " I came to call on you. Not as this or that's son. Not to fall on your neck. Nor to live here. Nor—damn your dirty little mind! I meant to say I didn't come for money. Sorry, Sorry. I simply came as I was, and I haven't altered since . . . " " *I* haven't altered since last Sunday week. I'm—" He stuttered again. He could not quite explain what he was . . . His voice broke. " I mind it—I'm—*I* don't alter—blackguard one week—live here the next—I keep to one or the other—you've hurt something most badly in me I didn't know was there." ' (pp. 281-2).

In short, it isn't easy to feel that the novelist in this essential part of his undertaking has attained a much more advanced maturity than the Rickie of the stories. Of course, what he has undertaken is something incomparably more difficult, and the weakness of the ' poetic ' element is made to look its worst by contrast with the distinction of what is strongest in the novel. Still, the contrast is there, and it is disastrous. What Mr. Forster offers as the centre of his purpose and intends with the greatest intensity of seriousness plainly cannot face the test of reality it challenges. Uninhibited by the passage about ' knowledge of the world ' and the ' cup of experience ' quoted above, the reader has to remark that Mr. Forster shows himself, for a writer whose touch can be so sure, disconcertingly inexperienced. An offence, even a gross one, against the probabilities, according to 'knowledge of the world,' of how people act and talk isn't necessarily very serious. But such a scene as that (c. xxvii) in which Ansell, the Cambridge

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

philosopher, defying headmaster, headmaster's wife, and prefects, addresses the assembled boys at Sawston School—

> ' " This man "—he turned to the avenue of faces—" this man who teaches you has a brother," ' etc.

—reflects significantly on the ruling preoccupation that, in the born novelist, could have led to anything so crudely unreal. And of all that in *The Longest Journey* centres in Stephen one has to say that, if not always as absurd, it is, with reference to the appropriate standard, equivalently unreal. The intention remains an intention, nothing adequate in substance or quality is grasped. And the author appears accordingly as the victim, where his own experience is concerned, of disabling immaturities in valuation: his attributions of importance don't justify themselves.

A ready way of satisfying oneself (if there were any doubt) that ' immaturity ' is the right word is to take note of the attitude towards Cambridge (after which one of the three parts of the novel is named). Rickie, a very innocent and serious young man, found happiness at Cambridge and left it behind him there, and that this phase of his life should continue to be represented, for him, by an innocent idealization is natural enough. But Rickie in this respect is indistinguishable from the author. And if one doesn't comment that the philosophic Ansell, representative of disinterestedness and intelligence and Cambridge, is seen through the hero-worshipping Rickie's eyes, that is because he is so plainly offered us directly and simply by the novelist himself in perfect good faith.

*Howards End* (1910), the latest of the pre-war novels and the most ambitious, is, while offering again a fulness and immediacy of experience, more mature in the sense that it is free of the autobiographical (a matter, not of where the material comes from, but of its relation to the author as it stands in the novel) and is at any rate fairly obviously the work of an older man. Yet it exhibits crudity of a kind to shock and distress the reader as Mr. Forster hasn't shocked or distressed him before.

The main theme of the novel concerns the contrasted Schlegels and Wilcoxes. The Schlegels represent the humane liberal culture, the fine civilization of cultivated personal intercourse, that Mr. Forster himself represents; they are the people for whom and in whom English literature (shall we say?—though the Schlegels are

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

especially musical) exists. The Wilcoxes have built the Empire ; they represent the ' short-haired executive type '—obtuse, egotistic, unscrupulous, cowards spiritually, self-deceiving, successful. They are shown—shown up, one might say—as having hardly a redeeming characteristic, except that they are successful. Yet Margaret, the elder of the Schlegel sisters and the more mature intelligence, marries Mr. Wilcox, the head of the clan ; does it coolly, with open eyes, and we are meant to sympathize and approve. The novelist's attitude is quite unambiguous: as a result of the marriage, which is Margaret's active choice, Helen, who in obeying flightily her generous impulses has come to disaster, is saved and the book closes serenely on the promise of a happy future. Nothing in the exhibition of Margaret's or Henry Wilcox's character makes the marriage credible or acceptable ; even if we were to seize for motivation on the hint of a panicky flight from spinsterhood in the already old-maidish Margaret, it might go a little way to explain her marrying such a man, but it wouldn't in the least account for the view of the affair the novelist expects us to take. We are driven to protest, not so much against the unreality in itself, as against the perversity of intention it expresses: the effect is of a kind of *trahison des clercs*.

The perversity, of course, has its explanation and is not so bad as it looks. In Margaret the author expresses his sense of the inadequacy of the culture she stands for—its lack of relation to the forces shaping the world and its practical impotence. Its weaknesses, dependent as it is on an economic security it cannot provide, are embodied in the quixotic Helen, who, acting uncompromisingly on her standards, brings nothing but disaster on herself and the objects of her concern. The novelist's intention in making Margaret marry Mr. Wilcox is not, after all, obscure. One can only comment that, in letting his intention satisfy itself so, he unintentionally makes his cause look even more desperate than it need: intelligence and sensitiveness such as *Howards End* at its finest represents need not be so frustrated by innocence and inexperience as the unrealities of the book suggest. For ' unreality ' is the word: the business of Margaret and Henry Wilcox is essentially as unrealized as the business of Helen and the insurance clerk, Leonard Bast—who, with his Jacky, is clearly a mere external grasping at something that lies outside the author's first-hand

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

experience (though his speech, like that of Miss Avery's genteel niece, is consummately caught: the born novelist's gift so apparent in *A Passage to India* is remarkable from the outset).

And the Wilcoxes themselves, though they are in their way very much more convincingly done, are not adequate to the representative part the author assigns them—for he must be taken as endorsing Margaret's assertion to Helen, that they 'made us possible': with merely Mr. Forster's Wilcoxes to represent action and practice as against the culture and the inner life of the Schlegels there could hardly have been civilization. Of course, that an intellectual in the twentieth century should pick on the Wilcox type for the part is natural enough; writing half-a-century earlier Mr. Forster would have picked on something different. But the fact remains that the Wilcoxes are not what he takes them to be, and he has not seen his problem rightly: his view of it is far too external and unsubtle.

At the same time it is subtler than has yet been suggested. There is the symbolism that centres in Howards End, the house from which the book gets its title. Along with the concern about the practical insignificance of the Schlegels' culture goes a turning of the mind towards the question of ultimate sanctions. Where lie—or should lie—the real sources of strength, the springs of vitality, of this humane and liberal culture, which, the more it aspires to come to terms with 'civilization' in order to escape its sense of impotence, needs the more obviously to find its life, strength and authority elsewhere?

The general drift of the symbolism appears well enough here:

> 'The sense of flux which had haunted her all the year disappeared for a time. She forgot the luggage and the motor-cars, and the hurrying men who know so much and connect so little. She recaptured the sense of space which is the basis of all earthly beauty, and, starting from Howards End, she attempted to realize England. She failed—visions do not come when we try, though they may come through trying. But an unexpected love of the island awoke in her, connecting on this side with the joys of the flesh, on that with the inconceivable . . . It had certainly come through the house and old Miss Avery. Through them: the notion of "through" persisted; her mind

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trembled towards a conclusion which only the unwise have attempted to put into words.' (p. 202).

—Yes, but the author's success in the novel is staked on his effectively presenting this 'conclusion' by means of symbols, images and actions created in words. And our criticism must be that, without a more substantial grasp of it than he shows himself to have, he was, as it turns out, hardly wise in so committing himself. The intention represented by Howards End and its associates, the wych-elm, the pig's teeth, Old Miss Avery and the first Mrs. Wilcox, remains a vague gesturing in a general—too general—direction, and the close of the book can hardly escape being found, in its innocent way, sentimental.

The inherent weakness becomes peculiarly apparent in such prose as this:

> 'There was a long silence during which the tide returned into Poole Harbour. "One would lose something," murmured Helen, apparently to herself. The water crept over the mud-flats towards the gorse and the blackened heather. Branksea Island lost its immense foreshores, and became a sombre episode of trees. Frome was forced inward towards Dorchester, Stour against Wimborne, Avon towards Salisbury, and over the immense displacement the sun presided, leading it to triumph ere he sank to rest. England was alive, throbbing through all her estuaries, crying for joy through the mouths of all her gulls, and the north wind, with contrary motion, blew stronger against her rising seas. What did it mean? For what end are her fair complexities, her changes of soil, her sinuous coast? Does she belong to those who have moulded her and made her feared by other lands, or to those who have added nothing to her power, but have somehow seen her, seen the whole island at once, lying as a jewel in a silver sea, sailing as a ship of souls, with all the brave world's fleet accompanying her towards eternity?' (p. 172).

Mr. Forster's 'poetic' communication isn't all at this level of poeticality (which, had there been real grasp behind his intention, Mr. Forster would have seen to be Wilcox rather than Schlegel), but it nevertheless lapses into such exaltations quite easily. And the 'somehow' in that last sentence may fairly be seized on: there

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the intention that can thus innocently take vagueness of vision in these matters for a virtue proclaims its inadequacy and immaturity.

In closing on this severe note my commentary on the pre-war novels I had perhaps better add explicitly (in case the implication may seem to have got lost) that they are all, as I see them, clearly the work of a significantly original talent, and they would have deserved to be still read and remembered, even if they had not been the early work of the author of *A Passage to India*.

In *A Passage to India* (1924), which comes fourteen years later (a remarkable abstention in an author who had enjoyed so decided a *succès d'estime*), there are none of these staggering discrepancies. The prevailing mood testifies to the power of time and history. For the earlier lyrical indulgences we have (it may fairly be taken as representative) the evocation of Mrs. Moore's reactions to the caves (' Pathos, poetry, courage—they exist, but are identical, and so is filth,' etc.—see pp. 149-151). The tone characterizing the treatment of personal relations is fairly represented by this:

> ' A friendliness, as of dwarfs shaking hands, was in the air. Both man and woman were at the height of their powers—sensible, honest, even subtle. They spoke the same language, and held the same opinions, and the variety of age and sex did not divide them. Yet they were dissatisfied. When they agreed, " I want to go on living a bit," or, " I don't believe in God," the words were followed by a curious backwash as if the universe had displaced itself to fill up a tiny void, or as though they had seen their own gestures from an immense light—dwarfs talking, shaking hands and assuring each other that they stood on the same footing of insight.' (p. 265).

Of course, tone and mood are specifically related to the given theme and setting of the novel. But the Indian sky and the Anglo-Indian circumstances must be taken as giving a particular focus and frame to the author's familiar preoccupations (exhibiting as these naturally do a more advanced maturity).

Fielding, the central figure in the book, who is clearly very close to the author, represents in a maturer way what the Schlegels represented: what may still be called liberal culture—humanity, disinterestedness, tolerance and free intelligence, unassociated with dogma or religion or any very determinate set of traditional forms.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He might indeed (if we leave out all that Howards End stood for) be said to represent what was intended by Margaret's marrying Henry Wilcox, for he is level-headed and practical and qualified in the ways of the world. His agnosticism is explicit. Asked

> ' Is it correct that most people are atheists in England now?'

he replies:

> ' The educated thoughtful people? I should say so, though they don't like the name. The truth is that the West doesn't bother much over belief and disbelief in these days. Fifty years ago, or even when you and I were young, much more fuss was made.' (p. 109).

Nevertheless, though Fielding doesn't share it, the kind of preoccupation he so easily passes by has its place in *A Passage to India* as in Mr. Forster's other novels, and again (though there is no longer the early crudity) its appearances are accompanied by something unsatisfactory in the novelist's art, a curious lack of grasp. The first Mrs. Wilcox, that very symbolic person, and Miss Avery may be said to have their equivalents in Mrs. Moore and Ralph, the son of her second marriage. Mrs. Moore, as a matter of fact, is in the first part of the book an ordinary character, but she becomes after her death, a vague pervasive suggestion of mystery. It is true that it is she who has the experience in the cave—the experience that concentrates the depressed ethos of the book—and the echo ' undermines her hold on life,' but the effect should be to associate her with the reverse of the kind of mysteriousness that after her death is made to invest her name. For she and the odd boy Ralph (' born of too old a mother ') are used as means of recognizing possibilities that lie outside Fielding's philosophy—though he is open-minded. There is, too, Ralph's sister Stella, whom Fielding marries:

> ' She has ideas I don't share—indeed, when I'm away from her I think them ridiculous. When I'm with her, I suppose because I'm fond of her, I feel different, I feel half dead and half blind. My wife's after something. You and I and Miss Quested are, roughly speaking, not after anything. We jog on as decently as we can . . . ' (p. 320).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Our objection is that it's all too easy. It amounts to little more than saying, 'There may be something in it,' but it has the effect of taking itself for a good deal more. The very poise of Mr. Forster's art has something equivocal about it—it seems to be conditioned by its not knowing what kind of poise it is. The account of the Krishna ceremony, for instance, which is a characteristic piece by the sensitive, sympathetic, and whimsically ironic Mr. Forster, slides nevertheless into place in a general effect—there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio—that claims a due impersonality. How radical is this uncertainty that takes on the guise of a sureness and personal distinction of touch may be seen in Mr. Forster's prose when a real and characteristic distinction is unmistakably there. Here is an instance:

> 'The other smiled, and looked at his watch. They both regretted the death, but they were middle-aged men who had invested their emotions elsewhere, and outbursts of grief could not be expected from them over a slight acquaintance. It's only one's own dead who matter. If for a moment the sense of communion in sorrow came to them, it passed. How indeed is it possible for one human being to be sorry for all the sadness that meets him on the face of the earth, for the pain that is endured not only by men, but by animals and plants, and perhaps by the stones? The soul is tired in a moment, and in fear of losing the little she does understand, she retreats to the permanent lines which habit or chance have dictated, and suffers there.'

The touch seems sure in the first three sentences—in fact, but for one phrase, in the whole passage. Consider, for instance, how different an effect the second sentence would have out of its context: one would suppose it to be satiric in tone. Here, however, it is a means to the precise definition of a very different tone, one fatigued and depressed but sympathetic. The lapse, it seems to me, comes in that close of the penultimate sentence: '. . . plants, and perhaps by the stones.' Once one's critical notice has fastened on it (for, significantly too, these things tend to slip by), can one do anything but reflect how extraordinary it is that so fine a writer should be able, in such a place, to be so little certain just how serious he is? For surely that run-out of the sentence cannot be

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

justified in terms of the dramatic mood that Mr. Forster is offering to render? I suppose the show of a case might be made out for it as an appropriate irony, or appropriate dramatically in some way, but it wouldn't be a convincing case to anyone who had observed Mr. Forster's habit. Such a reader sees merely the easy, natural lapse of the very personal writer whose hand is 'in.' It may seem a not very important instance, but it is representative, and to say that is to pass a radical criticism.

Moreover, a general doubt arises regarding that personal distinction of style—that distinction which might seem to give Mr. Forster an advantage over, say, Mr. L. H. Myers (to take another novelist who offers some obvious points of comparison). The doubt expresses itself in an emphasis on the 'personal.'

> 'Ronny approved of religion as long as it endorsed the National Anthem, but he objected when it attempted to influence his life.'
>
> 'Sir Gilbert, though not an enlightened man, held enlightened opinions.'
>
> 'Ronny's religion was of the sterilized Public School brand, which never goes bad, even in the tropics.'

> 'Incurably inaccurate, he already thought that this was what had occurred. He was inaccurate because he was sensitive. He did not like to remember Miss Quested's remark about polygamy, because it was unworthy of a guest, so he put it away from his mind, and with it the knowledge that he had bolted into a cave to get away from her. He was inaccurate because he desired to honour her, and—facts being entangled—he had to arrange them in her vicinity, as one tidies the ground after extracting a weed.'

> 'What had spoken to her in that scoured-out cavity of the granite? What dwelt in the first of the caves? Something very old and very small. Before time, it was before space also. Something snub-nosed, incapable of generosity—the undying worm itself.'

—A larger assemblage of quotations (there would be no difficulty but that of space in going on indefinitely) would make the point

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fairly conclusively: Mr. Forster's style is personal in the sense that it keeps us very much aware of the personality of the writer, so that even where actions, events and the experiences of characters are supposed to be speaking for themselves the turn of phrase and tone of voice bring the presenter and commentator into the foreground. Mr. Forster's felicities and his charm, then, involve limitations. Even where he is not betrayed into lapses of the kind illustrated above, his habit doesn't favour the impersonality, the presentment of themes and experiences as things standing there in themselves, that would be necessary for convincing success at the level of his highest intention.

The comparative reference to Mr. L. H. Myers thrown out above suggests a return to the question of Mr. Forster's representative significance. When one has recognized the interest and value his work has as representing liberal culture in the early years of the twentieth century, there is perhaps a temptation to see the weaknesses too simply as representative. That that culture has of its very nature grave weaknesses Mr. Forster's work itself constitutes an explicit recognition. But it seems worth while insisting at this point on the measure in which Mr. Forster's weaknesses are personal ones, qualifying the gifts that have earned him (I believe) a lasting place in English literature. He seems then, for one so perceptive and sensitive, extraordinarily lacking in (if the phrase will pass) force of intelligence ; it is perhaps, a general lack of vitality. The deficiencies of his novels must be correlated with the weakness so apparent in his critical and journalistic writings—*Aspects of the Novel, Abinger Harvest*[1]—the weakness that makes them representative in so disconcerting a way. They are disconcerting because they exhibit a lively critical mind accepting, it seems, uncritically the very inferior social-intellectual milieu in which it has developed. Mr. Forster, we know, has been associated with Bloomsbury—the Bloomsbury which (to confine ourselves to one name) produced Lytton Strachey and took him for a great writer. And these writings of Mr. Forster's are, in their amiable way, Bloomsbury. They are Bloomsbury in the valuations they accept (in spite of the showings of real critical perception), in the assumptions they innocently express, and in pervasive accent.

[1]See *Scrutiny*, Vol. V, No. 1, p. 100.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It might, of course, be said that it is just the weakness of liberal culture—'bourgeois,' the Marxist would say—that is manifested by Bloomsbury (which certainly had claims to some kind of representative status). But there seems no need to deal directly with such a proposition here, or to discuss at any length what significance shall be given to the terms 'liberal' and 'culture.' The necessary point is made by insisting that the weaknesses of Mr. Forster's work and of Bloomsbury are placed as such by standards implicit in what is best in that work. That those standards are not complete in themselves or securely based or sufficiently guaranteed by contemporary civilization there is no need to dispute: the recognition has been an essential part of the creative impulse in Mr. Forster. But that, in the exploration of the radical problems, more power than he commands may be shown by a creative writer who may equally be said to represent liberal culture appears well enough in *The Root and the Flower*—at least, I throw out this judgment as pretty obviously acceptable. In any case, I cannot see how what they both stand for can be dispensed with. They represent, these spokesmen of the finer consciousness of our time, the humane tradition as it emerges from a period of 'bourgeois' security, divorced from dogma and left by social change, the breakdown of traditional forms and the loss of sanctions embarrassingly 'in the air'; no longer serenely confident or self-sufficient, but conscious of being not less than before the custodian of something essential. It is, in these representatives, far from the complacency of 'freedom of thought,' but they stand, nevertheless, for the free play of critical intelligence as a *sine qua non* of any hope for a human future. And it seems to me plain that this tradition really is, for all its weakness, the indispensable transmitter of something that humanity cannot afford to lose.

These rather commonplace observations seemed worth making because of the current fashion of using 'liberal' largely and loosely as a term of derogation: too much is too lightly dismissed with it. To enforce this remark it seems to me enough to point to *A Passage to India*—and it is an occasion for ensuring that I shall not, in effect, have done Mr. Forster a major critical injustice. For I have been assuming, tacitly, a general agreement that *A Passage to India*, all criticisms made, is a classic: not only a most significant document of our age, but a truly memorable work

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of literature. And that there is point in calling it a classic of the liberal spirit will, I suppose, be granted fairly readily, for the appropriateness of the adjective is obvious. In its touch upon racial and cultural problems, its treatment of personal relations, and in prevailing ethos the book is an expression, undeniably, of the liberal tradition ; it has, as such, its fineness, its strength and its impressiveness ; and it makes the achievement, the humane, decent and rational—the ' civilized '—habit, of that tradition appear the invaluable thing it is.

On this note I should like to make my parting salute. Mr. Forster's is a name that, in these days, we should peculiarly honour.

F. R. LEAVIS.

# COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

## MUSIC: VAN DIEREN AND RUBBRA

Two publications of importance to those interested in contemporary music must be noticed this quarter.

The first is van Dieren's *String Quartet No. 5*, a miniature score of which has been published by the Cecilian Press, London, at the very reasonable price of 5/-.

The second is Edmund Rubbra's *Symphony*, a full score of which appears from the Universal Edition of Vienna. It's a pity the Oxford University Press shouldn't have undertaken this work, but one is only the more grateful to Universal for their enterprise. I hope all self-respecting libraries and all musical people who can afford the 63/-, will do what they can to support the venture and thus to encourage a composer of whom we ought to be proud.

W.H.M.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# CATERPILLARS OF THE COMMONWEALTH UNITE !

*THREE GUINEAS, by Virginia Woolf (The Hogarth Press, 7/6).*

This book is not really reviewable in these pages because Mrs. Woolf implies throughout that it is a conversation between her and her friends, addressed as she constantly says to ' women of our class,' though bits of it are directly and indirectly aimed at those women's menkind. What ' our class ' is turns out to be the people whose fathers function at Westminster, who ' spend vast sums annually upon party funds ; upon sport ; upon grouse moors . . . lavish[es] money upon clubs—Brook's, White's, the Travellers', the Reform, to mention the most prominent.' Mrs. Woolf would apparently be surprised to hear that there is no member of that class on the contributing list of this review. On the other hand, readers of this review will be surprised to hear that Mrs. Woolf thinks this class—the relatively very few wealthy propertied people in our country—is to be identified with ' the educated class ' and contains at this date the average educated man and the average student of the women's colleges of the older universities. This is the first of many staggering intimations for the reader that Mrs. Woolf is not living in the contemporary world: almost the first thing we notice is that the author of *Three Guineas* is quite insulated by class. What respectable ideas inform this book belong to the ethos of John Stuart Mill. What experience there is of domineering and hostile man (for that purports to justify the undertaking) is second-hand and comes from hearsay.[1]

It is no use attempting to discuss the book for what it claims to be, which is a sort of chatty restatement of the rights and wrongs

[1]Often unreliable. Mrs. Woolf instances as one burning injustice: ' Not a single educated man's daughter is thought capable of teaching the literature of her own language at either university.' There are at present six women regularly on the lecture-list for the English Tripos and I believe at no time in the last ten years has there been less than four—a generous representation for two colleges. Again: ' The great majority of your sex (Englishmen) are to-day in favour of war.'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of women of Mrs. Woolf's class, with occasional reflexions where convenient on the wrongs of other kinds of English-women. Mrs. Woolf, by her own account, has personally received considerably more in the way of economic ease than she is humanly entitled to, and as this book reveals, has enjoyed the equally relaxing ease of an uncritical (not to say flattering) social circle: she cannot be supposed to have suffered any worse injury from mankind than a rare unfavourable review. Writing this book was evidently a form of self-indulgence—altruism exhibits a different tone, it is not bad-tempered, peevishly sarcastic and incoherent as this book is throughout. As a reviewer I must say it impresses me as unpleasant self-indulgence, and as a member of a class of educated women Mrs. Woolf has apparently never heard of, I feel entitled to add that it is also highly undesirable. The reviewers have indeed all blessed the book, but any man who objected would lay himself open to the obvious charges of (a) being no gentleman and (b) expressing a resentment easily explicable in psychological terms, while any woman who refused to vote solid would of course be a traitress to the cause. Nevertheless I venture to voice what I know to be the opinion of many educated women, that Mrs. Woolf's latest effort is a let-down for our sex. *A Room of One's Own* was annoying enough, causing outpourings of disgust in the very quarters in which Mrs. Woolf, one gathered, expected to earn gratitude ; but this book is not merely silly and ill-informed, though it is that too, it contains some dangerous assumptions, some preposterous claims and some nasty attitudes.

The method is a deliberate avoidance of any argument—its unity is emotional. She tries in fact to make a weapon of feminine inconsequence, and I felt sympathetic with another reader of *Three Guineas*, of course of the wrong sex, who remarked to me that Mrs. Woolf's mental processes reminded him of Mrs. Nickleby's. The result affects me like Nazi dialectic without Nazi conviction. Take pages 39 to 40. They run like this (I preserve Mrs. Woolf's wording where possible): men dress up in their professional capacities as warriors, lawyers, courtiers, dons ; they forbid us women to wear such uniform, but don't let them suppose that they are anything but a ridiculous spectacle to us ; preserving archaic costume for public ritual in the universities emphasizes the superiority of educated men over other people ; this arouses com-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

petition and jealousy, emotions making for war ; women therefore can help to prevent war by refusing to wear academic dress (though they have at present a legitimate grievance in not being allowed to wear it at Cambridge) or to accept public honours, and by openly despising the men who do. I cannot understand all this as anything but phrases which have no meaningful connection with each other, but it is a fair specimen of the rhetoric in which the ' argument ' of *Three Guineas* is conducted. This passage moreover is illustrated with photographs, but as they are evidently selected with malice and as the thought perforce leaps to mind how a corresponding selection, probably as stupid-looking or ridiculous, could be compiled of eminent women's faces and persons in gala dress, the method defeats itself. As does another artifice. This is to write as though the defects of human nature existed only in the male branch (if deliberate it's bad tactics because it outrages common sense and if unconscious, as there seems reason to suppose, it discounts the whole undertaking). For example, Mrs. Woolf gives much space to the Victorian father who almost without exception, she thinks, kept his daughters in intellectual and economic subservience. I do not myself believe that the bourgeois fathers at any period were worse than the mothers, or that both varieties of parent are not at all times equally inclined to proprietary behaviour wherever unchecked by self-knowledge, whatever the state of the law and public opinion. Mrs. Woolf writes as though the Victorian fathers whom she adduces as jealous of their daughters marrying or achieving economic independence were not to be paralleled in many ages, including our own, by the common case of mothers who try to run their sons' lives (D. H. Lawrence's mother is a well-known type) and it is even arguable that the moral and emotional pressure exerted by mothers upon their children, particularly sons, is worse than the economic dependence of daughters and wives.

In fact the release of sex hostility this kind of writing represents is self-indulgent because it provides Mrs. Woolf with a self-righteous glow at the cost of furnishing an easy target for unsympathetic males, and at the still greater cost of embarrassing those women who are aware that the only chance of their getting accepted as intellectual equals by intelligent men (and so ultimately by the men who run the institutions and professions) is by living down

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their sex's reputation for having in general minds as ill-regulated as Mrs. Woolf's is here seen to be.[1] It is a reputation that will die the harder for *Three Guineas*.

For just think of the proposals made here for improving the position of educated women. There is her proposal for reforming the evils of the professions by women refusing to acquiesce in them. Instances given are: refuse to approve of academic dress and decorations because these somehow cause wars ; accept University lectureships in literature and then refuse to lecture because all such lectures and all teaching of literature (except by creative writers to those itching to become such themselves) is ' vain and vicious ' ;[2] refuse to pander to ' adultery of the brain ' by writing

---

[1]Mrs. Woolf heaps contumely upon Mr. Joad for alleging that conversation—by which he presumably means, as many of us do, serious discussion—is ruined by the presence of women. Though he might have put it less irritatingly, a conscientious woman would often feel obliged to admit from her own experience that this attitude is understandable. I have frequently heard accounts from educated women of their discomfort at discussions which have been nullified or spoilt by shameless exposures of the limitations of female intellects. Such accounts have often ended with the formula ' I blushed for my sex.' The remedy is of course a more rigorous intellectual discipline and that acquaintance with standards which produces humility. Mrs. Woolf's idea however is to abolish that kind of education altogether—see below.

[2]There are notoriously perfectly worthless lectures on literature—the kind students call ' potted textbook,' and those which are summaries of texts, answering to Mrs. Woolf's account of ' sipping English literature through a straw.' But Mrs. Woolf does not apparently mean these. It seems curious that she does not make the obvious suggestion that women should show their mettle by offering the right kind of teaching (for there is a right kind, unless the opinion of the better students is negligible, and she might have satisfied herself that this is so by undertaking some field-research —a necessary preliminary, one would have thought, to voicing an opinion on a subject of which Mrs. Woolf can have no first-hand knowledge having, according to *Who's Who*, been educated at home). She alleges in general terms the danger of infection

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for journals or publishers (alternative source of income for professional women writers not inheriting five hundred a year and rooms of their own not indicated). Then there is the plan for abolishing the man-made university with its examinations, degrees, and distinctions based on native ability, and substituting the ideal college as conceived by and for woman. At a time when all responsible educationists are expressing radical dissatisfaction both with the existing college system and with the accepted idea of university education this attracts our attention as a hopeful sign. But as a nice practical start Mrs. Woolf won't hear of university students being prepared in any way to earn a living, even by studying specialities. She thinks that adults from eighteen to twenty-one can justify their existence as burdens on the state by

---

from ' a mature mind lecturing immature minds ' on literature. This looks like a joke if you happen to know that the invariable complaint made by serious students of literature at *any* English university is that they suffer from working under lecturers who haven't the wherewithal for impressing a student with anything but boredom. The very marked objection of the run of such lecturers to a method of discussing literature that stimulates students to ask questions (I have heard of the objection being made in these words) is then understandable. And the objection of inferior or spoilt writers to the potential creation of a public capable of distinguishing between good and bad art is also understandable. By seeking information at the right instead of the wrong end of the process Mrs. Woolf could have learnt that the effective method of teaching literature does not tell young men and women what to approve or disapprove of (to do so would of course merely antagonize) but develops in them individual sensibility—a capacity for discovering what is of value in art, and how those values can be usefully organized. Examinations then become not what Mrs. Woolf censures as ' the reduction of English literature to an examination subject ' but a test whether a student has profited by his studies to become a person capable of discriminating, evaluating, and organizing his judgments, as well as whether he has studied widely enough to have acquired a sound basis for judging. ' Vain and vicious ' seem to be the right terms for those who would prevent such genuinely educational work.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

studying what she calls the art of living. Most people might feel that the art of living is best acquired incidentally to some discipline, either that given by brute circumstances when one is forced to stand on one's own feet (ideal: Robinson Crusoe) or that acquired in the pursuit of specialist studies—and many educationists now think it would be an improvement to combine the two. Without some such discipline the art of living becomes a pitiful affair. Mrs. Woolf's conception of it turns out to be the variety implied in the prospectus of an Arts Theatre I once received which announced something like this, that it would be a place where people who appreciated the arts of dress, epicurism and conversation would be able, in appropriate surroundings, to feed a corresponding taste for the art of drama. It seems to me the art of living as conceived by a social parasite. Mrs. Woolf wants studies in her college to be pursued by 'the clever and the stupid' side by side, without any troublesome distinctions or standards to spoil things. But if an institution for the higher education of adults is to defend humane values, as Mrs. Woolf in theory at any rate desiderates, it can only do so by jealously maintaining the highest possible standards where the arts are concerned and conducting the most rigorous scrutiny of intellectual processes generally. Hence its very first duty would be to inculcate the critical attitude and its second to develop in its students the ability to discriminate, judge and reject, along with the practice of responsible thinking and conduct. Mrs. Woolf however feels even more strongly than about the wrongs of women of her class the wrongs of writers like Sir Edmund Gosse and Tennyson (specified along with Keats as objecting to criticism—a few instances of better-known objectors to criticism, such as Miss Edith Sitwell and Marie Corelli, would have made the point clearer) and her most cherished project of all is to uproot criticism root and branch in the Nazi manner. With access to some practical control Mrs. Woolf would evidently develop into a high-powered persecutor; this throws a pretty light on her conception of truth, freedom and intellectual liberty which she calls upon educated women to maintain. She wants to penalize specialists in the interests of amateurs, and so her university, in spite of a promise that learning should be studied there for its own sake, could only be a breeding-ground for boudoir scholarship (a term I once heard applied to the learning of one of Mrs. Woolf's group) and belletrism. I cannot believe that any

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one else would think this an improvement on the existing kind of university studies, or that such a higher ' education ' would be more successful than the present kind in discouraging meanness of spirit, hostility to freedom of thought and hatred of disinterestedness. Mrs. Woolf's is no doubt a feminine conception of congenial study, as opposed to the existing masculine one of disciplined studies towards an end, but is it the kind of education women have struggled for admission to in the past? *Three Guineas* draws freely on the impressive biographies of the leaders of female emancipation, but from the quotations she gives I conclude the desires of these women were the same as mine and those of most men on entering college, the desire to continue a general education by disciplined specialist studies under the best available instructors (who, shameful admission, still happen to be men in most fields) and as far as possible in the company of those students able to set the highest standards and work with the greatest degree of maturity (who also happen to be men, which explains why sensible women would never dream of imitating Mrs. Woolf's feminist heroics). The least damning thing you might say about Mrs. Woolf's proposals is that they are irresponsible.

Out of these babblings the noble and dignified utterances of Josephine Butler, the vigorous good sense with which Sophia Jex-Blake pursued her reasonable demands, the humility of Anne Clough, appeal to Heaven against the context in which they find themselves. I think such women would rather not have had the claims of their sex advocated by Mrs. Woolf's methods. I myself stipulate that any piece of female writing advocating equality of opportunity for the sexes should prove its author to have a highly developed character and a respectable intellect, to be free from mere sex-hostility, to have an at least masculine sense of responsibility and that capacity for self-criticism which impresses us as a mark of the best kind of masculine mind, and over and above that to come from a woman capable of justifying her existence in any walk of life. There really are quite a number of women like that about. I would rather the kind of men who need converting from gross prejudice against women's abilities should read not *Three Guineas* but, among other recent women's books, *Highland Homespun* (Margaret M. Leigh), *Can I Help You, Madam ?* (Ethyle Campbell), *I'm Not Complaining* (Ruth Adam), *Sex and*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*Temperament in Savage Society* (Margaret Mead)—books which in varied ways exhibit women capable of doing a job (farming, business, education, social sciences) which demands sterling qualities of mind and character. These books are impressive documentation of women's right to share interests and occupations that have sometimes been considered suitable only for men.

But I have passed over Mrs. Woolf's plan for the complete emancipation of women of her class from the prison-house she considers every part of the home other than the drawing-room to be. To judge from *Three Guineas* Mrs. Woolf wants the women of her class to have the privileges of womanhood without the duties and responsibilities traditionally assumed by them, and to have the advantages of a man's education without being subsequently obliged, as nearly all men are, to justify it. Thus she urges the re-endowment of the almost extinct class of 'idle, charming, cultivated women' whose function would be to provide those dinner-tables and drawing-rooms where the art of living, as previously defined, is to be practised, and she is indignant that the early students of Girton and Newnham had to make their own beds and suffer plain living—though some responsible educationists now advocate university reform in the direction of obliging even men to conduct their education in the more realistic surroundings provided by the absence of servants.

On the other hand, 'Daughters of educated men have always done their thinking from hand to mouth . . . They have thought while they stirred the pot, while they rocked the cradle. It was thus that they won us the right,' etc. I agree with someone who complained that to judge from the acquaintance with the realities of life displayed in this book there is no reason to suppose Mrs. Woolf would know which end of the cradle to stir. Mrs. Woolf in fact can hardly claim that she has thus helped to win us the right, etc. I myself, however, have generally had to produce contributions for this review with one hand while actually stirring the pot, or something of that kind, with the other, and if I have not done my thinking while rocking the cradle it was only because the daughters even of uneducated men ceased to rock infants at least two generations ago. Well, I feel bound to disagree with Mrs. Woolf's assumption that running a household and family unaided necessarily hinders or weakens thinking. One's own kitchen and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nursery, and not the drawing-room and dinner-table where tired professional men relax among the ladies (thus Mrs. Woolf), is the realm where living takes place, and I see no profit in letting our servants live for us. The activities Mrs. Woolf wishes to free educated women from as wasteful not only provide a valuable discipline, they serve as a sieve for determining which values are important and genuine and which are conventional and contemptible. It is this order of experience that often makes the conversation of an uncultivated charmless woman who has merely worked hard and reared a family interesting and stimulating, while its absence renders a hypertrophied conversation piece like *Three Guineas* tiresome and worthless. Mrs. Woolf's plan for a new society intrigues me nevertheless. We are to have one kind of educated women, the idle charming cultivated women, who are to be subsidized as hostesses for the art of social intercourse (it is presumably to spare the sensibilities of these exquisite creatures that criticism of literature is to be prohibited—perhaps because they tend to dabble in letters themselves). Then we are to have a sterner kind of educated woman, the professional woman, for whose benefit the men's colleges are to be thrown open and all the available scholarship money divided equally between the sexes—the women who are to be just like men only more high-minded. Both these kinds are the five-hundred-a-year-by-right-of-birth-as-daughters-of-the-ruling-classes women. Then there are to be the base-born women who come in on the edge of the picture as drudges, to relieve both the other kinds of women of their natural duties (I mean of course nursing and rearing their own infants) as well as the routine of home-making. To impress hired labour for such work is enlightened ('remember we are in the twentieth century now,' writes Mrs. Woolf, and quotes a feminist writer to the effect that a mother is only incapacitated from pursuing her profession for two months per child), but Mrs. Woolf's ancestors who thought it advisable to send their daughters about London accompanied by a personal maid are the objects of much laboured irony (see p. 294). Then there are the unfortunate men who are to marry these daughters of educated men. If their wives choose to have babies—for women are to avert war by refusing to bear children, but apparently not indefinitely—they must from the start share the work of tending their offspring. A thorough-going revolution

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in their wage-earning pursuits, and so a regular social reorganization, unenvisaged by Mrs. Woolf, must take place to allow this. I like to think of the professional man hurrying home at four-hour intervals to spend upwards of half an hour giving the baby its bottle (for breast-feeding will only be able to survive among the uneducated)—among other duties ; and presently he will have little time to give to his profession if he has any unenlightened doubts about trusting the growing mentality and sensibilities of his child to hirelings. But perhaps Mrs. Woolf does not mean to be taken as seriously as this. Or perhaps she is advocating the Soviet system of handing the child over to the State to rear at the earliest possible age. If so she should say as much and clear up her projects ; they are at present all too nebulous.

I should like to end by making one part of them a little less so. It will be necessary to draw upon the disagreeable facts of experience instead of confining ourselves with Mrs. Woolf to asertions and wishful prophecy ; but to import even a little reality into such a discussion should be a service. The position then with regard to further female emancipation seems to be that the onus is on women to prove that they are going to be able to justify it, and that it will not vitally dislocate (what it has already seriously disturbed—and no responsible person can regard that without uneasiness) the framework of our culture. It is no use starting all over again with the theory with which the Victorian emancipators began, we have to look at the results of fifty years of experience and consider facts which worry thoughtful women. One is that it is the exceptional and not the average woman student who is the intellectual equal of the average serious undergraduate in the same subject. ' Every year I have from one to two dozen men reading my subject [one of the humanities, taken by a comparable number of each sex, in which women generally get better preparation at school than men] with whom I can discuss it as equals. I have learned from long experience that among the women students there will be only one such in three years, if that.' Observations of this kind from perfectly open-minded witnesses are not unusual, and substantiate the regular complaint of outstanding women students that there is a dearth of congenial intellectual company to be found in college—whereas the men can always find such company. Either, that is, the women's colleges do not cream the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

country as the men's do, or else there is precious little intellectual cream available for them to skim off. In relation to this, we may examine Mrs. Woolf's implication that women are victimized because they are restricted to about ten per cent of the students at both Oxford and Cambridge. It is an open secret that even at present the entrance lists can hardly be filled without lowering the standard of admission undesirably—this may well be because it is harder for intelligent girls at the lower end of the economic scale to get to college than for their brothers, but Mrs. Woolf is concerned only with daughters of the well-to-do and she may rest assured that none of these if up to honours standard is ever prevented from entering Oxford or Cambridge because the quota is filled.[1] Again, Mrs. Woolf thinks it monstrous that the men's scholarship list at Cambridge is more than six times the length of the women's, but the general informed opinion seems to be that to throw all scholarships open to both sexes would mean that women would probably get fewer scholarships than at present, and rarely any in some subjects (scholarships being awarded on evidence of promise as well as of acquirements). To say that this is because women have not had the educational advantages of men, that is, of being taught by men at school, only puts the difficulty further back. The obvious course is to advocate co-education at an earlier stage than college, as a preliminary to women's storming the older universities.[2] Mrs. Woolf's guns should have been trained not on

---

[1]Though of course, on general principles the restriction of their numbers should be left to the wisdom of the women's colleges themselves, which could be trusted to do that in their own interests. But Mrs. Woolf does not take this line.

[2]If Mrs. Woolf were to reply that those who cannot take high honours may nevertheless profit from going to college and should have the chance of doing so, we should have to remind her of the existence of the modern universities, to which women, like men, have unrestricted access. I say 'remind,' but the regular use of 'either university' in *Three Guineas* suggests that Mrs. Woolf has never heard of any but Oxford and Cambridge. To say that there is a case for keeping the older universities for those students capable of the highest standards in many specialisms is not to deny that it would be desirable for the modern universities to have

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the protectionists of the men's colleges but on the women of her own class who don't give their daughters the chance to start fair with their brothers, but send them to conventual establishments where they never come up against masculine standards. Mrs. Woolf should logically be campaigning for two things—co-education from the primary to the boarding schools, and a change in the social structure which will allow the daughters of *any* men to enter upon the highest course of studies they are fitted for. As for the daughters of Mrs. Woolf's class, evidence suggests that they value the opportunities offered by the universities less than in the early days when these had to be struggled for. 'I am in the minority of those who go there to work and they think it funny,' the daughter of an educated man, in her first year at one of the Oxford colleges, remarked to me recently. Perhaps related to this is the complaint often heard from intelligent Oxford undergraduates that the women students there make themselves a nuisance. It suggests another reason for deploring the tone of *Three Guineas*. One hears there is still plenty of sex-hostility about in the common-rooms and combination-rooms; Mrs. Woolf only cites the indefensible manifestations of such an attitude, but women cannot afford to give such prejudice any grounding.

If from evidence of what limited progress we have made in equalizing the sexes we wish to move to a more profitable attack on theory than *Three Guineas* makes there is *Sex and Temperament in Savage Society*. Miss Mead's investigation of different kinds of societies where (a) the women are 'masculine' in temperament and activities and the men 'feminine,' (b) both sexes are 'masculine,' (c) both are 'feminine,' provides real evidence (assuming the other anthropologists have checked the sources) that many qualities and habits of feeling which we think sex-linked are the arbitrary results of social forms. If a competent social psychologist were to apply the findings of this book to the problems connected with emancipating women within our culture we might get somewhere at last. Certainly there is no longer any use in this field of speculation for the non-specialist like Mrs. Woolf.

Q. D. LEAVIS.

---

much more of the atmosphere and educational method of the former. Here is another reform Mrs. Woolf might more reasonably have demanded in the name of women.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# THE T. E. HULME MYTH

*T. E. HULME, by Michael Roberts (Faber and Faber, 10/6).*

T. E. Hulme was even in his life time the object of a cult which the publication of *Speculations* (which contains most of his writings) did apparently nothing to dispel. Perhaps the fragmentary nature of these writings, his untimely death in the war, his support of then fashionable ideas are enough to excuse the special way he was thought of and written about. One must distinguish here between the praises of those personal friends whose opinions in various degrees command respect and the snobs who surrounded his reputation with an atmosphere so close that it was difficult to approach his work without bias.

As a thinker he was essentially an amateur. This quality secured him a hearing similar to that obtained by Dr. Richards's *Principles of Literary Criticism*. In *Speculations* we find the same dogmatic ' incisive ' style, the refreshingly unacademic contempt for authority, the zest in exposing what Hulme thought charlatanry (two quotations come to mind: ' I consider it a duty, a very pleasant duty and one very much neglected in this country, to expose charlatans when one sees them ' and ' There is a tremendous amount of hocus-pocus about most discussions of poetry ') and together with all this an air of many-sidedness, of embracing several disciplines and of escaping from the academic specializations. Not that he was ever smug. In his trenchant distinctions and his welding together of distinctions made in different fields into apparently brilliant positions of startling clarity (the hard dry ' classical vision ') he undoubtedly indulged a natural bent. Yet in so doing he actually blurred his meaning and whatever of value can be found in his writings can only be reached by patiently untangling his syntheses and toning down his overstatements.

This work has been admirably undertaken by Mr. Roberts. In a careful, but often verbose, exposition of the ideas to be found in *Speculations* he says ' most of his assertions are true in their proper field ; the problem is to restate them in a way that will make their limitations clear.' Yet he makes two important admissions: that the unity of Hulme's work is temperamental and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

' there is scarcely a single statement in Hulme that is not borrowed.' One may then pardonably wonder why he undertook the writing of this book. For the philosophies of Bergson, Husserl and Scheler, etc., if still insufficiently known in this country are better dealt with technically and by experts ; Hulme's æsthetic excursions are on Mr. Roberts' own showing unsatisfactory. One may legitimately doubt whether the great work on æsthetics Hulme planned would have been anything but good middleman work for Bergson and Lipps.

In short I doubt whether Mr. Roberts can substantiate his claim that Hulme's great merit is that the ideas he borrowed were important. It seems much more likely from the extensive *ad-libbing* (to borrow a word from the Americans) Mr. Roberts allows himself that Hulme's positions were useful to him in working out problems that are preoccupying him. A convenient summary occurs on pp. 252-3. ' Democracy and democratic progress are bound to fail if they do not rest on the religious or tragic outlook ; but within the framework of a Christian polity, whose economy reflected the moral principles it professed, a form of democracy would be not only possible but also necessary, for democracy is the form of government that recognizes most openly the responsibility of the individual and the fact that all government rests on the consent of the governed. Progress towards such an end is not impossible . . . ' In reaching this conclusion Mr. Roberts is just and frank in pointing out Hulme's limitations. But he himself does not appear to realize how damaging he is to the Hulme myth. It is clear from this book if it was not so before that Hulme was of importance almost exclusively as a stimulating influence, and was possibly more valuable in conversations than in his writings. Many of his dicta can be found in different settings in, for example, the work of T. S. Eliot. But these ideas are only valuable when worked out and properly defined. It is by the success of those who are known to have come under his influence that Hulme will be esteemed.

H. A. Mason.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# HOPKINS AND PATMORE

*FURTHER LETTERS OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, Edited by Claud Colleer Abbott (Oxford University Press, 16/-).*

The latest volume of Hopkins' letters adds little that is new to our knowledge either of the man or the poet. Various aspects of his character and genius which were shown in the earlier volumes are further illustrated, but it is chiefly a matter of additional confirmatory detail, and there is a good deal which is simply dull.

The correspondence relating to his conversion (there are several letters to and from Newman) brings home once more not only the depth and sincerity of his religious convictions but also his independence and strength of character. Having announced his conversion to his parents, he writes to Newman: 'Their answers are terrible: I cannot read them twice.' The following remark gives perhaps a hint of the conflicts behind some of the poems and the ascetic spirit in which he dealt with them:

> 'The melancholy I have all my life been subject to has become of late years not indeed more intense in its fits, but rather more distributed, constant and crippling. One, the lightest but a very inconvenient form of it, is daily anxiety about work to be done, which makes me break off or never finish all that lies outside that work . . . When I am at the worst, though my judgment is never affected, my state is much like madness.'
>
> (p. 109).

There is further evidence of the variety and intensity of Hopkins' interests outside literature; besides the frequent references to music and the visual arts, we find him conducting long arguments with A. W. M. Baillie about Greek etymologies, advancing new theories with superb confidence in defiance of all recognized authority.

The correspondence with Patmore, which occupies a hundred pages of this volume, does not increase our esteem for Patmore. A good deal of it follows this pattern: Hopkins having made numerous minute criticisms of Patmore's latest poems, the latter replies:

> 'If I can I will set it right, but, at this distance of time from the composition of the poem it is very dangerous to make more

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

than verbal alterations . . . were I to remodel a passage, however short, I fear the alteration would look like a patch of a different colour.' (p. 163).

It is very difficult to see why Hopkins should have been so tolerant of Patmore's work (' Your poems are a good deed done for the Catholic Church, for England, for the British Empire.'). Other critics were much less encouraging, as the poet ruefully notes:

> ' Mr. F. Harrison . . . speaks of my work as "goody-goody muddle," and in last Saturday's *Athenæum* . . . " Honoria " and " Amelia " are described as " girls smelling of bread-and-butter." ' (p. 220).

But Patmore's letters leave no doubt that he retained ample confidence in his own profundity. It is not surprising to find that he could make little of Hopkins' own poetry.

There are several interesting fragments of literary criticism scattered throughout these letters. Hopkins describes Arnold's poems as having all the ingredients of poetry without quite being it (p.43), praises the essay on *The Literary Influence of Academies* (p.74), and defends Arnold's opinion of Keats against Patmore's assertion that Keats was merely effeminate and sensual (pp. 233-9). In a letter to A. W. M. Baillie as early as 1864 he has begun tentatively ' to *doubt* Tennyson ' : this leads to a long discussion of the degrees of poetic language and inspiration, and then, after extravagant praise of a section of *In Memoriam* to the characteristic remark: ' Inconsequent conclusion: Shakespeare is and must be utterly the greatest of poets.' (p. 68 seq.). Later, discussing the poems of Patmore's dead son, he says, ' They are strong where this age is weak—I mean Swinburne and the popular poets, and, I may say, Tennyson himself—in thought and insight.' (p. 188). Similarly he is critical of the archaisms of Bridges and Dixon, and of the strained allegory and lack of common sense in a dramatic poem by ' a young Mr. Yeats ' called *Mosda*—which nevertheless contains ' fine lines and vivid imagery.'

This scholarly and expensive volume presumably completes the collection of letters, and looking at them as a whole one feels that they are of very unequal interest. What is needed now is an intelligent selection in one volume at a reasonable price.

R. G. Cox.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# MR. SPENDER'S PLAY

*TRIAL OF A JUDGE, by Stephen Spender (Faber and Faber, 5/-).*

Mr. Spender has always met with indulgence from publishers and reviewers. Respectable names can be quoted in support of the view that each of his works is a masterpiece, or at least points towards a more glorious future. Whereas, in fact, as is known to readers of this journal, almost the opposite is the case. Yet his most recent work is announced by the publishers as ' a tragic statement,' and by himself (presumably) on the title-page as a ' tragedy.' (Mr. Auden, we remember, was content with calling *Paid on Both Sides* a charade).

In examining the pretensions of this poetical drama it will be convenient to start from the notion of ' tragic *statement.*' For the most notable portion of the play—and the only one in which the author writes with any clarity and force—occurs in the fifth act. Here various barely disguised versions of the author discuss their points of view. There is a Communist, a Liberal judge and later a ' Fascist ' leader. But the kind of clarity and force which their statements have adequately place the pretensions. For they are no more than could be attributed to his own prose work on the same theme—the position of Liberalism between the two more rigid ' ideologies.' He puts the well-known arguments in such a way that no one could mistake them. Nor does he seek to favour (or so it seems) the Communist more than the Liberal, and the Fascists once the stylization is admitted are creditably drawn. It is clear from various remarks uttered by Mr. Spender that he has been working towards this style for a long time and attributes to it remarkable virtues. Yet it does not force conviction on us by any poetical means. Nor do the arguments penetrate far enough into the problems involved to convince us intellectually. The blurb asserts: ' The material is political, but the readers and the audience will, according to their abilities, find deeper levels of meaning.' Apart from a passing tribute to the beauty of this piece of advertisement, the attentive reader will quickly recognize it as bluff. The meaning in this portion is on the surface and when read leaves you exactly where you were.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is difficult to discover wherein the tragedy lies. The personages have the puppet-like abstraction we have become familiar with from the plays of Mr. Auden. The Judge's Wife is a crude sketch of a pathological case, there is a Shavian Home Secretary, and the various political figures. Clearly tragedy cannot be concerned with these. It is evidently round the Liberal Judge that it must centre. Prolonged investigation suggests the irreverent thought that it is a tragedy according to the formula of Bradley. The judge, himself on trial, appeals to public opinion.

> Let them note well my tragic error
> Fatal to repeat
> When I renounced my public anger
> Before imagined expediency.

In the eyes of his friend his only weakness

> Was his faith in an absolute justice
> Beyond the State and beyond the law.

But Mr. Spender is at pains to show that the ' tragic error ' is not of any political importance and that in general the judge and his problems are quite removed from the ' reality ' of political life as expressed in the clashes of Communist and Fascist forces. Further the Judge as such maintains the justice of the state's laws and has no concern with absolute justice. Mr. Spender does not succeed in properly disentangling his theme. But where, if this interpretation is on the right lines, the central failing lies is in the emptiness of the verse in those passages where he attempts to bring out the inward stress of the Judge's position. In short the play is tragic in formula but not in content.

The play throughout bears all the marks of a carefully thought out method. In any given speech of sufficient length we find a blend of styles from the vaguely Elizabethan, the too liberal translations of Greek tragedies, the starkly modern, and the banal. Two examples must suffice (the mother of a murdered Communist speaking) :

> We went to bed early, for my son was a good son
> Causing me no anxiety with late hours but staying at home ;
> Going to rest at dark and rising to read by the dawn
> He was what you might call a studious one.
> Now I pray God to pour Hell fire upon his murderers

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Who, with a dark lantern—five there were—
Broke in with sticks and revolvers on our slumber
—Found nothing to steal except my solitary treasure
My son, my son. Sir, well I remember
That night, the hottest night of this summer, how
He coughed, so that if at all of evil I dreamt,
It was to pray he might die peacefully.

And this dialogue between the Judge and his Wife:

Dear, the night is turning cold,
I think we should go in.

I won't do as I'm told!
These brave, brave boys, are going to win.
I feel myself a girl again.

To whatever place I turn my eyes,
I stare at my own weakness
Which brings down a Polar night
Groaning with more than winter-long distress . . .

It is time to go in.
I have worked for many hours.
Dear, come back into the house.
Lead on.

[Exeunt].

Mr. Spender has had time in the three years he has spent on this work to study further and imitate the devices of Messrs. Eliot and Auden. But where he himself seems to speak in his own voice we find the same qualities and weaknesses as appeared in his first published collection *Poems*. I refer to those striking images which on inspection turn out either to be vague or to lead the attention away from the subject in hand. Examples taken at random are:

You know the law
Makes hourly statements like electric advertisements
In city squares—those man-tall golden letters

Regard to-day
Whose paper finger on the calendar
Has shaken the traditional libraries

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And still will wing like seed into the ground
To produce from the instant a generation of chaos

His living was one word
Influencing surrounding speech
Of a crowd's life, printless until
The words of all this time are frozen
By all our deaths into the winter library
Where life continually flows into books.

But now all crumbles away
In coals of darkness, and the existence
Of what was black, white, evil, right
Becomes invisible, founders against us
Like lumber in a lightless garret.

Mr. Spender's incapacity at this date to deal adequately with anything but such images provokes the most serious judgment. Since his first book he has tried various forms of writings in prose and verse, none of which have advanced him beyond the dilemmas raised by *Poems*. His career subsequent to that book has in short been one of literary frustration and dissipation. This latest work aims far too high ; nor does his failure show any promise for the future. The very fact of the labour plainly involved in this play makes more apparent the deep-seated lack of conviction and direction in his poetry. Evidently something more than industry is required if he is to find his feet.

The play has been acted by the Group Theatre players. Without having seen it I can well believe that it provided several striking *tableaux* and that in general it is well adapted for the stage. But as poetic drama the plain fact is that the play is still-born. And if it is a worthy member of the small group of poetic dramas of recent years it is high time that a distinction be drawn between stage successes and a fruitful dramatic movement. There is clearly a public that will attend these performances, but it would be interesting to know more of the quality of the audiences and what contact is created between them and the plays. To judge from the text of *Trial of a Judge* at any rate one would consider this play to be closet drama of the most barren kind. Mr. Spender has not had any greater success in coming to grips with life than he had in *Vienna*.

H. A. Mason.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# THE POET OF REVOLUTION

*ARTHUR RIMBAUD, by Enid Starkie (Faber and Faber, 15/-).*
*RIMBAUD IN ABYSSINIA, by Enid Starkie (Oxford University Press, 7/6).*

' The aim of poetry,' said Ducasse, ' must be practical truth.' During the nineteenth century the poet's conception of his function underwent a change and poetry was made to serve an extra-literary purpose. Its aim was no longer to glorify the existing order, as great poets of the past had glorified it, but to ' change ' it ; it was not ' a superior amusement,' but a means of solving metaphysical problems. This meant that the horizon of literature was immensely extended and the relations between literature and life were revolutionized. It follows that the poet's life assumes a new importance for the literary critic, and a writer like Mr. Edmund Wilson seems disposed to treat Rimbaud's later life as a continuation of his poetry.

Mr. Wilson's view is perhaps a debatable one, but his instinct is surely right. There is nothing in Rimbaud's life that the critic can safely disregard. But we must remember that though his life may help us to understand his poetry, the study of his life must not become a *substitute* for the study of his poetry as it does in many of the books written about him. 'There are times,' said Rivière, ' when I almost believe that he is the greatest poet who has ever lived.' That of course is an exaggeration, but the emphasis falls in the right place. There have been greater poets than Rimbaud, but it seems to me that whatever the limitations of his achievement, his natural endowment was superior to that of any other French poet. An accident of birth made him not simply a great poet, but a great leader ; and for this reason he seems to speak to our generation with a greater urgency than any other modern poet. He was not (to borrow words that Mr. Eliot once used of Baudelaire), important primarily as a ' human proto-type of new experience' and 'only secondly because he was a poet.' There can be no distinction between a great writer's poetry and what we are pleased to call his ' message.' It is simply because they were first and foremost great poets that the work of Baudelaire and Rimbaud possesses what for want of a better word can only be called an extra-literary importance.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Miss Starkie's *Arthur Rimbaud* is a useful and informative life of the poet. It provides the critic, approaching his work for the first time, with all the facts that he is likely to need, and it is pleasantly free from the fashionable doctrinaire bias which has been a serious obstacle to the study of his poetry. The smaller book, in particular, contains a lively account of the political background during Rimbaud's stay in Abyssinia and throws a good deal of light on his activities as a trader. It brings out Rimbaud's natural generosity of character, but it proves conclusively that he was far from being the shrewd man of business that he is sometimes thought to have been.

Miss Starkie's book, however, is much more a popular life than a work of serious scholarship. It is difficult to avoid the impression that her air of scholarly detachment conceals a fundamental uncertainty about some of the main problems of the poet's life. There is no evidence (except a bad poem of Verlaine's) to support her ' central theory ' that ' Rimbaud, at the time of his greatest creative power, believed that he had become God.' Rimbaud's own words at the close of *Une saison en enfer*—'[*Je*] *me suis dit mage ou ange, dispensé de toute morale . . .* '—will hardly bear this interpretation.

The relations between Rimbaud and Verlaine have aroused a good deal of unhealthy curiosity among the biographers of both poets ; but though Miss Starkie displays considerable interest in the problem, one cannot help feeling that its significance has escaped her. Rimbaud's homosexuality (unlike Verlaine's) cannot be treated as a mere aberration or as an interesting psychological problem according to the taste of the writer: it must be related to his poetry and that is what Miss Starkie fails to do. Rimbaud was the poet of revolution. The driving impulse behind his work was a desire to demolish the existing order and to create a fresh one. The *Premiers vers* are a destructive survey of contemporary society, its institutions and beliefs, and they are only fully intelligible as a prelude to the metaphysical revolt of the *Illuminations*. The words from *Une saison en enfer*, *' l'amour est à réinventer,'* suggest that Rimbaud's homosexuality was, to some extent at any rate, an attempt in the *practical* sphere to divest himself as completely as possible of traditional morality and traditional ways of feeling ; and it has its parallel in the attempt

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to discover a new mode of consciousness in the *Illuminations*.

Miss Starkie's summary of the æsthetic theories in Rimbaud's letters[1] is clear and useful, but her chapter on the influence of 'occult' literature on his poetry is less satisfactory. It is perfectly possible to summarize a poet's theories without being a literary critic at all, but a discussion of influences can only be fruitful when the findings are constantly checked by the critic's responses to his text. I doubt myself whether the 'occult' literature had any *direct* influence on the *Illuminations*, though it may indirectly have stimulated Rimbaud's taste for speculative thought. But it is a pity that Miss Starkie suggests, as she appears to suggest, that this influence (supposing it existed) is of the same kind that we find in Balzac's novels, *Louis Lambert* and *Séraphita*. No one doubts the influence on Balzac, but in those novels he was simply dramatizing—with unfortunate results—the cloudy theories of some very second-rate 'thinkers.' Now the *Illuminations* are the work of a genuinely speculative mind making an independent approach to reality through the medium of poetry. Unless this is clearly grasped, we run the risk of missing the significance of Rimbaud's poetry altogether.

It is particularly unfortunate that a book which is likely to be many readers' first introduction to Rimbaud should be entirely inadequate in its treatment of his poetry. It is a curious fact that as soon as she comes to Rimbaud's poetry, Miss Starkie's writing loses all its vitality and becomes flat and lifeless as though she were not really interested in poetry at all. Her description of *Aube* —that incomparable poem—as 'one of the finest nature poems in the French language' might have come from one of the weaker manuals of French literature; and the comparisons between the *Illuminations* and a very undistinguished passage from Ballanche (p. 113), and the wretched fragments from Judith Gautier's *Livre de jade* (pp. 193-4) show something resembling an incapacity to read Rimbaud at all.

---

[1]These letters are published in J. M. Carré's valuable *Lettres de la vie littéraire d'Arthur Rimbaud* (Gallimard, 1931). This book also contains what purports to be the first authentic account of the destruction of *Une saison en enfer*—an incident which Miss Starkie only discusses in a very summary manner.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The chapter on the *Illuminations* is altogether too ambitious and contains theories which are really misleading.

' It is not surprising,' writes Miss Starkie, ' to find that many of *Les Illuminations* are the expression of Rimbaud's transcendental experience of God. There can be no doubt of the certainty of his vision of God, though no one would be so bold as to claim that it was Catholic or in any way fundamentally Christian. Many conflicting claims have been put forward for Rimbaud, but out of all these claims the conviction emerges that when a man has reached the ultimate heights of mystical, transcendental experience and union with God, creeds and dogmas are of no more account, and the experience will be precisely the same for the members of the different religions, whether of the East or of the West.'

' Mysticism ' is a scientific term borrowed from speculative theology. When used by a trained theologian, it may have a precise meaning ; but its appearance in literary criticism is nearly always a sign of critical indolence—an attempt to give the illusion of precision without the effort of rigorous thought. The study of a work like the Jesuit theologian Maréchal's *Études sur la psychologie des mystiques*, which is an object lesson in the extreme caution required in making any pronouncement about mystical phenomena at all, would, I think, make critics of Rimbaud less eager to jump to conclusions about the content of the *Illuminations*. I must state clearly that I am not here concerned with the authenticity of the mystics' claims, which lies outside the field of literary criticism, but with their *psychology*. There seems to me to be no possible parallel between Rimbaud's psychology and that of the mystics. There is none of the mystic's sense of possession. It is a striking fact that all through Rimbaud's poetry the revelation which he was seeking eludes him. ' *J'ai vu quelquefois ce que l'homme a cru voir,*' he says in the *Bateau ivre* ; but when he tries to tell us what he has seen, his poem goes to pieces. It ought to be plain, too, that if he had enjoyed the transcendental ' union with God,' he could never have written *Une saison en enfer*. For that poem is a confession that his quest (whatever it was) had failed. Nor is there any parallel between the ' spiritual dryness ' of the mystics, caused, as they believed, by God's withdrawal from them for a time to test their faith, and the extreme disillusion of parts of Rimbaud's poem.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Most of the mystical writers, whatever school they belonged to, appear to have started with belief in a personal God and a desire for union with him. Now I can find no evidence in Rimbaud's letters or his poetry that he shared this belief. Indeed, his statement that the poet should 'define the *amount* of Unknown arising in his time in the universal soul' makes any attempt to equate God with Rimbaud's 'Unknown' arbitrary. In the *Illuminations* Rimbaud tries to pierce the sensible appearances of things in order to reach the 'Unknown' which he thought was concealed behind them. This theory explains the curious tricks he plays with material reality:

> 'Un souffle ouvre des brèches opéradiques dans les cloisons, —brouille le pivotement des toits rangés,—disperse les limites des foyers,—éclipse les croisées.'

The clue to these pieces must be sought, I think, in their very individual imagery which Miss Starkie scarcely mentions. The whole collection is a comment on that strange phrase which occurs in the letters and in *Une saison en enfer*:

> 'Car JE est un autre.'

Rimbaud believed that there were in him two beings—the simple bourgeois whose existence was bound up with convention, and the poetical self or 'Voyant.' In order to express the 'Unknown' he tries to free himself from the old life and the conventional categories of thought. He therefore constructs a stylized, a fabulous world, which is as remote as possible from the world we know. Its proportions and the materials out of which it is constructed are monstrous:

> 'Ce dôme est une armature d'acier artistique de quinze mille pieds de diamètre environ.'

It is worked by strange engines:

> 'Des chalets de cristal et de bois se meuvent sur des rails et des poulies invisibles. Les vieux cratères ceints de colosses et de palmiers de cuivre rugissent mélodieusement dans les feux.'

It is inhabited by metaphysical monsters who remind one of M. Valéry's Teste. In *Génie* he describes one of them:

> 'O ses souffles, ses têtes, ses courses ; la terrible célérité de la perfection des formes et de l'action!'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Miss Starkie thinks that this is a description of God. It seems to me, on the contrary, that all these monsters are emanations of the poet's own personality, are attempts to realize the new mode of consciousness attributed to the 'Voyant' in the letters. They are examples of minds which are governed by different laws from our own are are therefore free from our particular limitations.

Although Rimbaud regarded the poet as a 'Visionary,' the value of his work does not seem to me to lie in any mystic revelation. It lies in his power of modifying, and not merely of modifying but of reorganizing, our sensibility. To submit oneself to the new mode of seeing, to walk the crystal streets and ride in the diamond carriages described in the *Illuminations* is to undergo an extraordinary process of liberation from the stereotyped ways of seeing and feeling. Our usual conception of the real is based on the assumption that there is only one interpretation of reality, only certain prescribed combinations of feelings. Rimbaud's work is not a denial of that reality ; it is an assertion that there are other possible interpretations and other possible combinations of feelings besides the ones to which we are accustomed. The order of the classic writers of the seventeenth century was a true order, but it was not the final order. The failure of their successors to realize that in literature no order can ever be final and their attempt to continue the work of the *grand siècle* meant that classicism hardened into dogmatism. It is Rimbaud's lasting achievement to have demonstrated that the classic view is only one of many possible views ; and his protest against a narrow dogmatism which was impervious to the impact of living experience made him a revolutionary in the true sense. For great poetry is always in some sense the discovery of new truth and there are times when traditional poetic forms have to be discarded, not merely tinkered with, and new forms created in order to express the new vision. To have done this gives Rimbaud his gigantic stature among modern poets, but because he was without a living tradition to help him he was unable to consolidate his findings and his vision remains fragmentary and incomplete.[1]

---

[1]The piece called *Conte* is worth careful attention. It is not one of the best poems in the collection—it is more a *statement* than an *experience*—but, as often happens with a great poet's lesser works, it helps considerably to explain his method.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*Une saison en enfer* is less difficult than the *Illuminations* and its general meaning has been appreciated by most of Rimbaud's critics. Miss Starkie's discussion of the poem is more satisfactory than her chapter on the *Illuminations*, but she appears to think that once she has told us what the poem is ' about ' her work as a critic is done. She makes no attempt to deal with its remarkable technical originality, and her statement that it contains ' some of the finest examples of French prose in the grand manner ' is the reverse of helpful.

This poem has been described by one critic as ' the bible of the modern consciousness,' and the description is a good one. In it Rimbaud explores some of the central problems of our time ; and the problems he explores are as pressing to-day as they were at the time when the poem was written. The three main problems are his unsuccessful quest for the ' Unknown,' his relations with Verlaine, and the problem of belief. Of the three it is the last which is the most important. In one of the finest sections of the poem he writes:

> ' Je dus voyager, distraire les enchantements assemblés dans mon cerveau. Sur la mer, que j'aimais comme si elle eût dû me laver d'une souillure, je voyais se lever la croix consolatrice.'

What makes Rimbaud peculiarly representative of the modern world is his profound awareness of the need of a religious solution with an inability to accept traditional beliefs. The crucial word in these splendid lines is the word *consolatrice*. He had failed to reach the ' Unknown ' by his own route, but to become a Christian seemed to involve a compromise with the life he had discarded. He felt, as others have felt, that belief was a *temptation*. In another place he writes:

> ' Les blancs débarquent. Le canon! Il faut se soumettre au baptême, s'habiller, travailler.'

It is clear from this that for Rimbaud religion was associated with colonization and exploitation. He could not believe that truth was clothed in such a corrupt form. ' *M. Prudhomme,*' he said. ' *est né avec le Christ.*'

Rimbaud's treatment of his subject lifts him out of the rank of men like Corbière and Laforgue, fine poets though they were, and puts him with the masters. Laforgue was not an intellectual

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

poet in the same sense as Rimbaud. His poetry is a skilful distillation of emotion from ' the contemporary situation,' or what he took to be the contemporary situation. It is simply a succession of feelings and its precarious unity a personal one—the mood of the poet—which could only be achieved as long as the writer did not probe too deeply into his problem. Now the unity of Rimbaud's work is not merely a personal one. He gives us the emotion *and* the situation from which it springs, that is to say, there is an organic, an objective relation between the poem and the events which produced it. The emotion is generated by the contemplation of the problem and it therefore possesses that impersonality which only belongs to the greatest poetry.

This leads to a consideration of its technical qualities. In spite of the immense influence of Laforgue on the development of modern poetry, Rimbaud's technical mastery is of a different order. Laforgue was essentially a virtuoso. The *Derniers vers* sometimes make one feel like the spectator at the exhibition match, applauding the brilliant images as one might applaud ' the lightning return ' ; and when it's over the appropriate comment seems to be not ' a great poem,' but ' a splendid performance.' The difficulty of the writer who lives in an age of instability is that he is unable to give cohesion to his work. The emphasis, instead of falling on the work as a whole, tends to fall on a succession of intense but unrelated ' moments,' on the individual image or the individual word. With Laforgue the image sometimes remains suspended without any precise relation to the poem as a whole, and it is this difficulty which Rimbaud manages to overcome. One of the principal themes of *Une saison en enfer* is fear—fear that the poet's experiments were leading him not to the 'Unknown' but to insanity, or possibly to something worse.

> ' Ma santé fut menacée. La terreur venait. Je tombais dans des sommeils de plusieurs jours, et, léve, je continuais les rêves les plus tristes. J'étais mûr pour le trépas, et par une route de dangers ma faiblesse me menait aux confins du monde et de la Cimmérie, patrie de l'ombre et des tourbillons.'

The short breathless sentences suggest the terror that seizes him. Instead of journeying towards his goal, his footsteps are directed towards the void. In the superb manipulation of the o's, m's and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

n's we hear the hollow reverberations of someone wandering helplessly lost in the darkness of the void. The final image is clearly related to the staccato rhythm which is characteristic of the whole poem. In a passage like this—there are plenty of them—the movement of the poem rises to a crescendo and the image proceeds naturally, inevitably, from what has gone before. It is not a decoration, but the fullest expansion of the poet's emotion and seems to gather up the whole intention of a particular sequence.

*Une saison en enfer* is a dramatic poem—a conflict whose issue is in doubt until the last line is written. It is not all pitched in the same key like the *Derniers vers* ; there are violent changes of mood and the problem before the poet was to find a medium that would reflect these extraordinary interior vicissitudes. The solution was the dramatic form in which the experience was presented. What Rimbaud did was to invent a new mythology. The ' I ' of his poem is not at all the timid, shrinking young man of the *Derniers vers* or Mr. Eliot's early work. Rimbaud adopts a curious extension of personality and traces his own history, which is also the history of ' the modern man,' from his primitive origins down to the present time, compares what he has been at different periods of this continued existence with what he is now. In *Mauvais sang* he writes :

> ' J'ai des mes ancêtres gaulois l'oeil bleu blanc, la cervelle étroite, et la maladresse dans la lutte. Je trouve mon habillement aussi barbare que le leur. Mais je ne beurre pas ma chevelure . . .
>
> ' Pas une famille d'Europe que je ne connaisse.—J'entends des familles comme la mienne, qui tiennent tout de la déclaration des Droits de l'Homme . . .
>
> ' Il m'est bien évident que j'ai toujours été *race inférieure* . . .[1]
>
> ' Je suis assis, lépreux, sur les pots cassés et les orties, au pied d'un mur rongé par le soleil.—Plus tard, reître, j'aurais bivaqué sous les nuits d'Allemagne . . .
>
> ' Je n'en finirais pas de me revoir dans ce passé. Mais toujours seul ; sans famille ; même, quelle langue parlais-je? Je ne me vois jamais dans les conseils du Christ ; ni dans les conseils des Seigneurs,—représentants du Christ.'

[1]Italics mine.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This is contrasted with what he has become and enables him to make the necessary comment on the popular slogans and palliatives of the day:

> ' Qu'étais-je au siècle dernier: je ne me retrouve qu'aujourd'hui. Plus de vagabonds, plus de guerres vagues. *La race inférieure*[1] a tout couvert—le peuple, comme on dit, la raison, la nation et la science.'

The picture is filled in by a series of *personæ* which are sometimes representations of the poet like the ' Epoux Infernal,' or of another as Verlaine becomes the ' Vierge Folle.' In this way the various themes and problems are dramatized and their relation to one another forms the pattern of the whole poem.[2]

There is no room to illustrate the remarkable variety of Rimbaud's great poem, but the last section deserves particular attention:

> ' L'automne. Notre barque élevée dans les brumes immobiles tourne vers le port de la misère, la cité énorme au ciel taché de feu et de boue. Ah! les haillons pourris, le pain trempé de pluie, l'ivresse, les mille amours qui m'ont crucifié! Elle ne finira donc point cette goule reine de millions d'âmes et de corps morts *et qui seront jugés*! Je me revois, la peau rongée par la boue et la peste, des vers plein les cheveux et les aisselles et encore de plus gros vers dans le coeur, étendu parmi les inconnus sans âge, sans sentiment. . . J'aurais pu y mourir . . . L'affreuse évocation! J'exècre la misère . . . '
>
> ' Un grand vaisseau d'or, au-dessus de moi agite ses pavillons multicolores sous les brises du matin. J'ai créé toutes les fêtes, tous les triomphes, tous les drames. J'ai essayé d'inventer de

---

[2]Compare particularly the confession with which the poem opens with the ironical confession of the ' Vierge Folle ' in *Délires I* ; and the passage in which Rimbaud sees himself as a condemned criminal (' *Prêtres, professeurs, maîtres, vous vous trompez en me livrant à la justice . . .* ') in *Mauvais sang* with the passage in which he becomes the mountebank in front of his stall (*J'ai tous les talents!—Il n'y a personne ici et il y a quelqu'un . . .* ) in *Nuit de L'Enfer*.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nouvelles fleurs, de nouveaux astres, de nouvelles chairs, de nouvelles langues. J'ai cru acquérir des pouvoirs surnaturels. Eh bien! je dois enterrer mon imagination et mes souvenirs! Une belle gloire d'artiste et de conteur emportée!

'Moi! moi qui me suis dit mage ou ange, dispensé de toute morale, je suis rendu au sol, avec un devoir à chercher, et la réalité rugueuse à étreindre! Paysan!'

Instead of carrying him away into the 'Unknown,' as it did in the *Bateau ivre*, the vessel is bringing him back to 'rugged reality.' The image of the stately vessel, half lost in the mists, is a symbol of the poet's own serenity. *Immobiles* is the focal point of this passage as the word *insoucieux* is of the *Bateau ivre*, and the calm movement of this section forms a strong contrast with the helter-skelter movement of the earlier poem. The ironical *Paysan!* is a reference back to an earlier passage in *Mauvais sang* and is a good instance of the skill with which the different themes are linked together. The witty renunciation of the poet's super-human powers, which sometimes reminds me of Prospero's dismissal of his magic spirits at the end of *The Tempest*, strikes a note which is unique in French literature of the last century. It stands out against a background of uncertainty as the unrivalled expression of complete spiritual health.

The close of *Une saison en enfer*, however, is remarkable not as an example of 'French prose in the grand manner,' but as an example of the way in which the grand manner can be adapted to the needs of the modern *poet*. It has all the dignity, all the spaciousness of the grand manner without any of its corresponding defects.

Miss Starkie tells us 'that there is no modern poetry, in whatever country it may be, that does not claim to owe its source to Rimbaud.' It is true that his influence has been immense, but it has also been an immense disaster. For the *Illuminations* have been imitated and the discoveries of *Une saison en enfer* neglected. What happens when the method of the *Illuminations* is imitated by writers who do not possess Rimbaud's vision can be seen from the experiments of the Surréalistes and the dramas of Claudel. A medium which is capable of such matchless variety of expression as Rimbaud's prose-poetry clearly deserves to be studied by living poets. There is a further reason why the poem has particular

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

importance for modern poetry. The development of free verse seems to have been carried as far as it can go and the next step is likely to be either a return to traditional measures or a poetry written in the medium which Rimbaud used with such consummate skill. For, properly used, prose-poetry is capable of a greater range of feeling than free verse, or at any rate than the free verse that has so far been written.

It remains to point out that Miss Starkie's bibliography will hardly add to her reputation as a scholar. A critical bibliography in a book of this sort would have been useful, but Miss Starkie's bibliography appears to be purely ornamental. There is little in the text and nothing in the bibliography to tell us which of the fifty ' authorities ' mentioned are worth reading, or from what point of view they are written—always an important factor in the case of Rimbaud. No publishers' names are given, and the titles of the books and the authors' names are not always correct. Among the critical studies mentioned here two strike me as indispensable: Edgell Rickword's *Rimbaud : the Boy and the Poet* (Heinemann, 1924)[1] which is probably the best general study of the poet that has been written, and Rivière's *Rimbaud* (Kra, 1930). Ruchon's *Jean-Arthur Rimbaud* (Champion, 1929), though rather academic, is useful. In order to get an idea of the various approaches it is worth looking at Coulon's *Problème de Rimbaud* (Rationalist), Daniel-Rops' *Rimbaud : le drame spirituel* (Catholic) and Etiemble and Gauclère's *Rimbaud* (Marxist). I cannot imagine what principle of selection led Miss Starkie to include Lalou's *Histoire de la littérature française contemporaine* and leave out Edmund Wilson's *Axël's Castle*. And Mr. Samuel Hoare's article on Rimbaud, which appeared in *The Calendar of Modern Letters* for June, 1925, might have been mentioned in the list of articles in reviews.

The proofs of the book do not seem to have been read with the care they deserve. The quotations themselves are often inaccurate, genders are uncertain and the manipulation of the past participle appears to have been left in places to the printer's discretion.

MARTIN TURNELL.

---

[1]This book is unfortunately out of print, but I believe that remainders can still be picked up cheaply.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# RAINER MARIA RILKE

*RAINER MARIA RILKE: Aspects of his Mind and Poetry, edited by William Rose and G. Craig Houston, with an Introduction by Stefan Zweig (Sidgwick and Jackson, 6/-).*

*LATER POEMS, by Rainer Maria Rilke, translated with an Introduction and Commentary by J. B. Leishman (The Hogarth Press, 10/6).*

*RILKE'S APOTHEOSIS: A Survey of Representative Recent Publications on the Work and Life of R. M. Rilke, by Eudo C. Mason (Basil Blackwell, 2/-).*

Rilke died on the 29th December, 1926, and in the years that have elapsed since his death an immense quantity of material, critical and biographical, has been published in Germany, in France, in Switzerland and Italy, to mention only the principal countries where interest in this poet has been intense and shows no sign of abating. Indeed, everywhere in Europe this interest has deepened as his works become better understood and information about the history of his life is gradually assembled and placed on record. Everywhere, that is to say, except in England. In spite of the fact that translations of his major writings have been appearing at intervals here since 1930, Rilke is still hardly more than a name to the majority. It must, however, be admitted, if in no carping spirit, that Rilke has not been especially fortunate in his English translators. I mean, he has not enjoyed the privilege of literally being recreated in another tongue like Proust, or like Paul Valéry, who had the advantage of Rilke's own incomparable skill in this branch of literature. Still, we now have passable versions of the early *Stories from God*, we have the celebrated *Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (too often misleadingly described as an autobiographical novel), while Mr. Leishman has attempted the exacting and rather thankless task of turning selections from the *Neue Gedichte*, the *Letzte Gedichte*, the *Requiem* and all of the *Sonnets to Orpheus* into English rhymed verse. Last but not least there is the blank verse rendering of the *Duinese Elegies* by Edward and Vera Sackville-West, which, in spite of imperfections, is a feat that deserves high praise considering the prodigious difficulty of the undertaking. It is characteristic of the sort of reception accorded

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to Rilke in this country that this work, originally published in a superbly produced but limited and exceedingly expensive edition (1931), still remains to all intents and purposes inaccessible to the general reader.

The appearance, then, of the four studies in book form by Dr. Rose and his colleagues, which stands at the head of our list, is something of an event. In justice to Mr. Leishman, however, it should be remarked, that the discerning and scholarly introductions he has written to his volumes of translations must have played an important part in paving the way for the recognition of Rilke by the English public. Now much of the critical writing on the subject of Rilke tends to lose itself in endless discussions of his so-called mysticism, of his religiosity, his search for God, his attitude to love, his conception of death, etc., etc., so that a bewildering confusion of 'interpretations' has been produced behind which the living work grows disconcertingly remote. Dr. Rose, for instance, in his essay on the latter theme, writes apropos of *Malte*, that it 'is the study of a mind in the thrall of an "anxiety neurosis," and to understand its relation to Rilke's personal experience, for it contains much of an autobiographical nature, we must go back to his first visit to Paris in 1902.' And the reason for this visit turns out to be, according to Dr. Rose, his disappointment in the failure of a play of his produced in Berlin and a feeling that he was not understood by the public! Apart from my suspicion that the attribution of 'anxiety neuroses' to characters of fiction is simply a mechanical trick *à la mode* that leaves the real question unanswered, I fail to see how this statement of the case establishes any connection between Rilke's sudden desertion of his wife and home, for that in the light of after events is really what it amounted to, and the unbearably poignant revelations of *Malte*. Yet by this time we know a good deal of the details of Rilke's life. For apart from the seven volumes of his published correspondence, there are the innumerable reminiscences of his friends as well as the careful biographical researches of his son-in-law. Notwithstanding, here is Dr. Zweig (who knew him well) speaking in his introduction of 'the genuinely poetic existence' that Rilke led, his 'perfect way of life,' 'the matchless harmony of life and creative activity,' when it is perfectly obvious that Rilke unscrupulously sacrificed everything to the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pursuit of his art, even to the extent of evading those responsibilities and obligations of ordinary life that he thought might interfere with his purpose. What, moreover, is the point of trying to create the impression that Rilke was a sort of internationalized personage who was at home everywhere, quite content to live without any ties, with no regular habits, no address and no fatherland? Whereas on Rilke's own confession the rootlessness of his existence was a source of great grief to him, to which he refers again and again in his letters, though he has a tendency to camouflage the trouble. When he speaks of 'die Heimatlosigkeit des Oesterreichers,' for instance, it means in effect, the homelessness of an Austrian born in Prague in 1875 and suffering from the peculiar disabilities of a family background and early upbringing such as were those of young Rilke. ' No successful and prosperous poet or artist of our times has ever been so free as Rilke ' writes Dr. Zweig. Alas! for Rilke, for surely he paid a heavy price for his freedom, if such it can be called. No doubt Dr. Zweig has some show of reason on his side, and it is apparently difficult to acknowledge Rilke's qualities at all without trying, as many do, in particular his numerous women admirers,[1] to make a sort of saint out of him. But to paint such a portrait of the poet is not going to be a very helpful preparation for an understanding of his poetry. This portrayal misses the cardinal point, namely, that Rilke's whole life and personality revolved continually round a fundamental conflict in his nature, a deep-seated spiritual and physical maladjustment as incurable as the horrible and painful disease from which he died. And it may be remarked in passing that the manner of his death acquires an illuminating, not to say, sinister significance, when it is remembered that a dominating theme running through his work is precisely the conception of a *personal*

[1]In this respect Rilke has, however, been luckier than Lawrence. For these admirers in their public utterances show often real glimpses of insight. Edmond Jaloux reproduces a letter from a lady which contains the following admirable characterization of Rilke and his work: ' Les femmes mettent longtemps à admettre les histoires infinies et indéfinies comme celles de Rilke, des histoires toujours reprises, qui ne se terminent jamais qu'avec un point de suspension devant du mystère.'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

death, the idea, which is expressed in such startling fashion in *Malte*, that everyone must die his *own particular* death and no one else's. His restlessness, therefore, and the frequent physical distress about which he complained, were an externalization of an internal malaise. Yet it was just this malaise that formed the source and inspiration of his work, that modified the materials of his art, and remained the necessary condition for all his creative activity. For us living in this present world of ours the malady presents a clinical picture that is all too familiar, even if it is not susceptible of a ready diagnosis.

But in order to get our subject in perspective it is as well to emphasize the fact that Rilke was an artist first, last and all the time. His triumphs and his failures should be considered as those of an artist, one, moreover, who practised his craft with a tireless and single-minded devotion. And because Rilke was a great artist, who could objectify his dilemma, state it in terms of universal validity, his bitter struggle has come to represent something that touches us, his contemporaries, very closely indeed. In the atmosphere of his own country he found little satisfaction, and he therefore lived for many years in France and latterly in Switzerland, at least when he was not travelling extensively all over Europe. In this as well as in other respects his case has many features in common with that of Lawrence, though it is as well to add that the differences between the two are as important as the resemblances. No man has ever been more fortunate than Rilke in having a whole host of generous and influential friends, who could put at his disposal castles, houses, rooms, to make use of whenever and as long as he wished. And Rilke did make use of them, particularly the castles. They became almost a necessity to him which he could not do without. They symbolized some immensely valuable quality that was lost and that he needed to bolster up his life, like his researches into the history of his family and the belief, to which he often alluded, since proved to be entirely groundless, that he was descended from a noble Carinthian family of great antiquity. These aspects of his character, however, are apt to be misleading when estimating his achievement. They are responsible for the stinging indictment by the German critic Gundolf, a protagonist of the rival Stefan George faction, in which Rilke is shown to be a namby-pamby æsthete and something of a prig

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

into the bargain, who deliberately withdrew himself from the world and escaped into art. In his excellent critical survey Mr. E. C. Mason sums up this charge by calling Rilke a feeble character, devoid of real will-power and real spiritual dignity. So far as Gundolf is concerned, Rilke is damned on account of his refusal to accept the hierarchical framework, the certainty of dogma and the mystic sacrament, that is to say, his evasion of all restrictions and limitations. But Gundolf falls into the common and fatal critical error of abstracting more or less arbitrarily from the body of the work certain notions assumed to be decisive ones, and then demolishing these as false and untenable. This type of critic takes the shadow for the substance, for when all is said and done, it is the actual, one might say, the physical work of art in its integrity that should always remain the ultimate criterion. And to Rilke's masterpiece, the *Elegies*, not to mention the *Sonnets to Orpheus*, Gundolf makes scant reference. It is doubtful whether he can have seriously examined them or else he would hardly have been betrayed into such extravagance.

The *Elegies from the Castle of Duino*, which were begun in 1910 and completed at the Chateau de Muzot in 1922 (appearing, it is instructive to note, about the same period that saw the publication of *The Waste Land*, *Mauberley* and *Ulysses*), must be read as a single poem in ten sections. It is the mature expression of a poet who has striven with an absolutely ruthless persistence for the perfection of his art. It is the final statement of a man who has courageously sought to come to terms with the discordant experience of his life. In a sense it is a justification for life itself. To his Polish translator who asked for an interpretation, Rilke wrote: 'Am I the one to give their correct interpretation to the Elegies. They reach out infinitely beyond me. I regard them as a further shaping out of those essential presuppositions that were already given in the *Stundenbuch*, that in the two parts of the *Neue Gedichte* make a playful and experimental use of the image of the world, and then, in *Malte*, conflictively concentred, strike back into life, and there lead almost to the demonstration that this so bottomlessly suspended life is impossible. In the *Elegies*, from the same premisses, life becomes possible again ; indeed, it here experiences that ultimate affirmation to which young Malte, although on the right, hard road ' des longues

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

études,' was not yet able to conduct it.'[1] The poem, then, begins as a lament and ends in praise. It celebrates the acceptance of suffering and the essential unity of the world visible and invisible, of health and disease, of life and death. Mr. E. L. Stahl, in a very able study of the work, poses the underlying question thus: 'How can we exist in the face of our inadequacies in life, death and love?' But this seems a little pointless, for, after all, we do exist somehow, whether we like it or not. Rather does Rilke contemplate the possibilities of understanding and accepting existence so that, in the face of our inadequacies, we do not perish in despair. In short, 'the ultimate and metaphysical reasons for human existence' is the true subject of the poem. The argument it pursues, while making use of the most common materials of our intimate and everyday experience, is poised with the skill of a magician between the abstract and the concrete, and demands great concentration and a finely attuned response from the reader. This, for example, the opening lines of the 5th elegy known as 'Les Saltimbanques,' is a fair illustration. I am quoting from the Sackville-West translation:

> But tell me, who are these itinerants,
> these fugitives more hasty than ourselves,
> urgently driven from the start,—by whom?
> To gratify what discontented will?
> Not only does he drive them, bend them, twist them,
> winnow them, throw them up and catch them back,
> but they float down, as out of slippery
> and greasy air, on to their little carpet,
> worn thin and threadbare by their ceaseless leap
> upwards ;—

So far so good. We have the image of an action before us. But this image of the performing acrobats very soon begins to deepen, to extend in many directions at once, the acrobats become the principle of purposeless activity. And in the next passage, in spite of the vividness of the metaphor we are no longer in contact with the familiar world but far beyond it:

---

[1]Translated by Leishman in his introduction to *Requiem*.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Alas, around this centre blooms the rose
of the performance ; and its petals drop.
Around this ramrod, round this pistil, met
by its own pollen, fruiting with the fruit
illusory of a disinclination
not realised by them, and glittering
with a most thin veneer
of glib reluctance smiling with false smiles.[1]

The language, so to speak, is double-edged and continually transcends the ordinary connotation of the words. It is language at once simple and highly charged with suggestion and allusion, in consequence bristling with paradoxes, verbal subtleties and ambiguities. Mr. Stahl's analysis brings out this point well when he describes it as both neological and profoundly etymological. ' He (Rilke) infuses into the most usual words, such as "Anschein," " Bezug," " leisten," " überstehen," richly individual notions while revealing their original, hidden and almost forgotten meaning.' The verse, therefore, carries not one meaning, but many ; and the temptation, which Mr. Stahl not altogether escapes, of giving a reasoned account of the poem's content, is liable to obscure its most astounding qualities. No doubt the implicit philosophy in its broad outlines can be fairly precisely formulated. And in any case the principal ' dramatis personæ,' the lovers, the young dead, the angels and animals, the mother, the acrobats, the hero, etc.,

---

[1]The original reads:

Ach und um diese
Mitte, die Rose des Zuschauns:
blüht und entblättert. Um diesen
Stampfer, den Stempel, den von dem eignen
blühenden Staub getroffnen, zur Scheinfrucht
wieder der Unlust befruchteten, ihrer
niemals bewussten,—glänzend mit dünnster
Oberfläche leicht scheinlächelnden Unlust.

For the verbal dexterities here no English equivalent is possible unless a complete paraphrase were attempted that would stray too far from the direct, concrete imagery of the German.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are there for all to see. They stand out as large as life. But the army of interpreters all eager to tell the uninitiated exactly what it is all ' about,' often seem to forget that this is a poem and not a philosophical treatise. A logical exposition of the ' argument ' which will clear up matters now and for all time, distracts the reader from the true purpose and intention of the work. This purpose, Mr. Stahl rightly insists, as does Mr. C. M. Bowra in his examination of the *Neue Gedichte*, is never merely ethical or didactic. It points no moral and communicates no message for the betterment of mankind. The poem has no other object than to describe in utterance of strangely moving and austere beauty a view of life as revealed to an intensely individual sensibility. This austerity proceeds in the first place from the terse and compact structure of the verse which is yet susceptible to extraordinary technical variety and modulations of tone. There are few things in the field of literature more astonishing than this progress of Rilke towards the sublime expression of the *Elegies*, which approximate nearer to sublimity as conceived by Longinus than any other writing of our own day. For a poet who began his career in the German Romantic tradition, and whose earlier productions abound in second-hand ' feeling,' facile musical effects, conventional melancholy and emotionalized nostalgia,[1] it was a veritable triumph of the spirit and the culmination of a long, arduous and sustained effort. Rilke's development, in which the great landmarks are the *Stundenbuch*, the *Neue Gedichte* and finally the *Elegies* and the *Sonnets to Orpheus*, and in which the prose work *Malte Laurids Brigge* occupies a central position, has already been the subject of much critical study. Yet with regard to this latter work, for instance, little of any value has been said about its relationship to novel-writing of the time and its influence on later developments. The very curious fact seems to have escaped notice that it was published in 1910, that is to say, four years before the first volume of *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu !* Altogether the part which the enormous effort of Rilke's development as

[1]His son-in-law and biographer Carl Sieber in his valuable book on Rilke's youth makes no bones about it, as when he describes him as a hopelessly sentimental young man, who gave no evidence of being in any way a prodigy or especially precocious.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an artist plays in his private history, constitutes a problem worth much fuller treatment than it has yet received. However, the books under review, if they do not broach questions of this nature, at any rate should perform a useful service in focussing attention here on one of the most accomplished modern masters of the literary art.

RICHARD MARCH.

## AIDS TO ENGLISH TEACHING

*POETRY IN PRACTICE, by Norman Callan (Lindsay Drummond, 3/6).*

*ENGLISH POETRY: A STUDENTS' ANTHOLOGY, selected by Kenneth Muir (Oxford University Press, 5/-).*

The first of these books is a scheme for the teaching of poetry in schools; the second an anthology for the use of, I presume, Sixth-form students. Both of them seem to me very good indeed; which is not to say that either of them is perfect.

Mr. Muir's anthology is a little curiously arranged. I do not like the section heading of 'Sacred and Profane Love'; to lump one group of poems as 'Criticism of Life' seems rather rash, and I can't see why one of the seven sections should be devoted to 'The Seasons.' There is far too much Shelley, especially in the 'Satire' section, where he has no right except for the Wordsworth passage from 'Peter Bell the Third': his presence there in such quantities distorts the meaning of the word 'satire.' But these are comparatively small faults, outweighed by merits. There is excellent material for comparative work—Mr. Muir is not afraid to introduce prose passages or French extracts for this purpose—and the chief English poets and genres are well represented by passages which lend themselves admirably to critical analysis and appreciation. Many English teachers will welcome this anthology—it will supply a good background of reference for Higher School work and dispenses with the necessity for the *Oxford Book of English Verse*.

It would be very easy to pick holes in Mr. Callan's book: the teaching of English is much easier in theory than in practice—

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a remark which cuts both ways. But it is, certainly, the most intelligent and most helpful book of its kind that I have read yet. It is constructive and, above all, practical: any English teacher who does not adopt the mystic adoration attitude to poetry should benefit by reading it. Mr. Callan insists that the word is the unit in poetry and that, therefore, the study of the words of a poem must be the first step to understanding it. He stresses the necessity of getting at the correct syntax of a piece of verse. (That this is not an unnecessary warning will be realized if we ask ourselves how many people really grasp the construction of

> Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day . . . )

He points out the desirability of comparative study of the use of words by different poets in more advanced school work, and how much more fruitful this is than desultory reading or preparation for the usual examination inanities on ' Browning's love of art ' or ' The supernatural in *Poems of To-Day*.' (Of course, everyone realizes that this latter type of preparation is inevitable).

His suggestions for the writing of verse are interesting. This may be a helpful and enjoyable exercise, but I cannot attach quite as much importance to it as Mr. Callan does. This is because I differ from his assumption that a good English teacher must be a writer of poetry. I dare say most English teachers have written verses at some time, but very few either are, or would claim to be, poets. I feel that more extensive damage might be done by a teacher who fancied himself to be a poet than by one with an averagely good critical intelligence who had no illusions about his own poetic performance. But, if Mr. Callan means that in order to teach children to write metrically, we should be able to write metrically ourselves, I have no quarrel with his attitude ; in any case, I do not think the teaching of verse composition can go much beyond this point.

One other criticism there is which can be directed against most books of this nature ; that there is some reluctance to consider the age-factor, and a temptation to let one idea lead to another, with the result that we are left with a vague impression as to how much the author thinks should be done concurrently and, if consecutively, in what order. Mr. Callan may well reply that we may use our

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

own common sense about this, but the impression remains that there is a corresponding uncertainty in the author's own mind and that the scheme had its main outlines obscured by over-abundant suggestions, many of which are obviously impracticable at the age at which the scheme commences.

It is rarely that two books connected with the teaching of English appear together and can be praised with such minor reservations. They are both to be strongly recommended.

FRANK CHAPMAN.

*A HISTORY OF ECONOMIC THOUGHT, by Erich Roll (Faber and Faber, 12/6).*

Recent emphasis on the relation between ideas and the social environment in which they were produced is not new. Many responsible for important intellectual advances, when attempting to explain the persistence as well as reveal the invalidity of ideas they were exposing, have resorted to a materialist explanation of their origin. One generation, that is, has found the ideas of an earlier one inconsistent and irrational, not because its predecessors were fools but because the problems with which they were concerned and the presuppositions on which their answers were based were relevant alone to the conditions of their day. Adam Smith argued that mercantilists emphasized the supreme importance of a favourable balance of precious metals because merchants were, on those grounds, able to identify their interests with those of the prince or of the state. (*Wealth of Nations*, Bk. 4, c. i.): and Mr. J. M. Keynes has recently pointed out that the apparently obvious problem of effective demand was ignored by economists influenced by Ricardo's claim that it could never be deficient, because of the ' complex of suitabilities ' in that latter doctrine ' to the environment into which it was projected.' *'The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*, p. 33). It is surprising, then, that the history of economic and social doctrine has so largely been written as if the theories concerned bore little relation to the practical needs of the societies in which they emerged ; it has too often become an arid and meaningless catalogue of ideas that appeared out-of-date and irrelevant. It is to Mr. Roll's credit that he has attempted to show that ' the appearance of certain ideas is not fortuitous but

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dependent upon causes which can be discovered,' (p. 16) by examining economic thought as a practical discipline seeking to solve practical problems. ' Economic theories are always, though often tortuously, related to economic practice. Only a study of the interplay between objective conditions and the theorizing of man can provide a guide through the conflicts of ideas. The ideas of the past had their roots in institutional arrangements, in the relations between social classes and groups in their conflicting interests . . . ' (p. 14).

If he has not entirely succeeded it is not that his method is at fault ; he has not consistently exploited it. A certain methodological confusion and an insufficiently detailed acquaintance with economic history seem responsible for an occasional lapse into the older method of treating the history of ideas. He fails, for instance, to explain the important part usury played in the economic life, and therefore ideas, of the middle ages and the sixteenth century (pp. 50-1) ; his analysis of mercantilism does not take sufficiently into account the economic controversies and the conflicts of group interest with which most of its exponents were directly connected (c. 2) ; thus, while he has many sound points to make on both those phenomena, his account at times resembles one of those old histories of an abstract intellectual evolution, away from past error to modern-classical or marginal-utility ' truth,' which we know only too well. A passage on Adam Smith is worth quoting, not because it is typical of Mr. Roll's approach, but because it illustrates precisely how this kind of history should not be written. It concerns his ' faith in the natural order.' ' The naturalist school of philosophy to which he belonged had had an unbroken tradition from the later Greek Stoics and Epicureans onwards. It reappeared in the works of Roman Stoics like Cicero, Seneca and Epictetus, received an enormous stimulus in the Renaissance and Reformation, showed itself again in a modified form in Bacon, Hobbes and Locke, and came to full flower in the writings of Smith, the physiocrats, and the later radicals.' (p. 145). Now Mr. Roll is perfectly aware that statements like this tell one very little about the history of ideas, and that the real problem is to explain—as, in several cases, he convincingly does—why what seems natural and obvious to one generation, becomes artificial or unnatural for its successors. But his account seems at places hesitant and insufficiently explicit ; he

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

does not describe in sufficient detail the economic problems that faced particular thinkers, and thus explain the kind of thought they produced. A major question of interpretation is involved here. For Mr. Roll rightly remarks that ' it is difficult to present convincingly this casual relation between economic practice and economic theory in more detailed discussions of their history ' (p. 16) ; and the solution surely lies in a sphere which he has deliberately omitted—perhaps unavoidably, if the scale of the book was to be at all manageable ; in what he calls 'the theories developed by bankers, business men and politicians.' (p. 18). A study of the everyday, ' practical,' opinion of any particular period is essential, if we are to understand why academic theorists were concerned with their own particular problems, and why their answers ran along certain specific lines.

But these should be understood as minor criticisms. Mr. Roll has done a valuable piece of work, and, on the whole, sustains his thesis with remarkable clarity. His account of Marx—to whose as yet untranslated *Theoriem über den Mehrwert* this book owes a great deal—is one of the most lucid that has appeared ; and his method is particularly effective in a discussion of the classical and post-classical schools. He brings out the close relation between the theories of Ricardo and Adam Smith, and the necessities of Britain's expanding economy—the establishment of freedom of trade in all commodities against the privileges of a landlord class and commercial groups ; he shows how the new conception of the ultimate source of wealth—in labour rather than foreign trade—was involved in the triumph of industrial over commercial capitalism ; and he explains how the inconsistencies in their theories of value were due to a reluctance to admit the existence of what Socialists were shortly to call the element of exploitation in the relation between capital and labour. Indeed, the main reason, he argues, why economic thought was shortly to abandon the labour theory of value—useful enough when ' sinister interests ' had to be overthrown—was precisely that ' by a slow and subtle process the classical analysis was purged of those parts which offered an opportunity for attack on the political implications of liberal economic theory.' (p. 316 ; *cf.* pp. 296, 348). There is little doubt that theories of Marginal Utility have been used to prove that an economy working in response to uncontrolled market prices, what-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ever the distribution of wealth, represents the fullest utilization of available resources. Economists to-day may prefer to give their analyses a purely neutral significance, and equilibrium theory may serve simply to express market price as a function of certain given variables of supply and demand ; and the technique thus evolved may have its value for detailed analytical problems. But Mr. Roll's main contention remains valid : there has been a significant change in the type of problems economists have been considering since the Classical School. His plea that Political Economy should concern itself with the major problems of social change as they present themselves in practice—' the economical structure,' as Richard Jones, an early nineteenth-century economist put it—is particularly urgent at times like the present. It is all the more effective because the effort would, he shows, be in the best traditions of economic thought.

P. HARRIS.

*BUSONI'S LETTERS TO HIS WIFE, translated by Rosamund Ley (Arnold, 16/-).*

I have already, in an essay published in *Music and Letters* for July, 1937, tried to say something about the peculiar problems with which Busoni's music presents the listener, and this book would provide a starting-point for investigations along the lines I indicated. Short of that, the only way one could ' review ' this book would be to string together lists of quotations—passages of fine musical criticism (particularly one about Beethoven), remarks about audiences, about contemporary composers, about Busoni's ideals, and some curious anticipations of D. H. Lawrence. So perhaps it is best merely to say that this is one of the few books of predominantly musical interest that the ' educated ' man will wish to buy and to preserve in his library. If these letters are perhaps less immediately impressive than the reported conversation of van Dieren's *Down Among the Dead Men*, they are equally the testament of a mind of rare integrity and distinction. The translation is ' readable.'

W.H.M.

*SCRUTINY is published by the Editors, 6 Chesterton Hall Crescent, Cambridge; distributed by Deighton, Bell & Co., Ltd., Trinity Street, Cambridge ; and printed by S. G. Marshall & Son, Round Church St., Cambridge, England.*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED